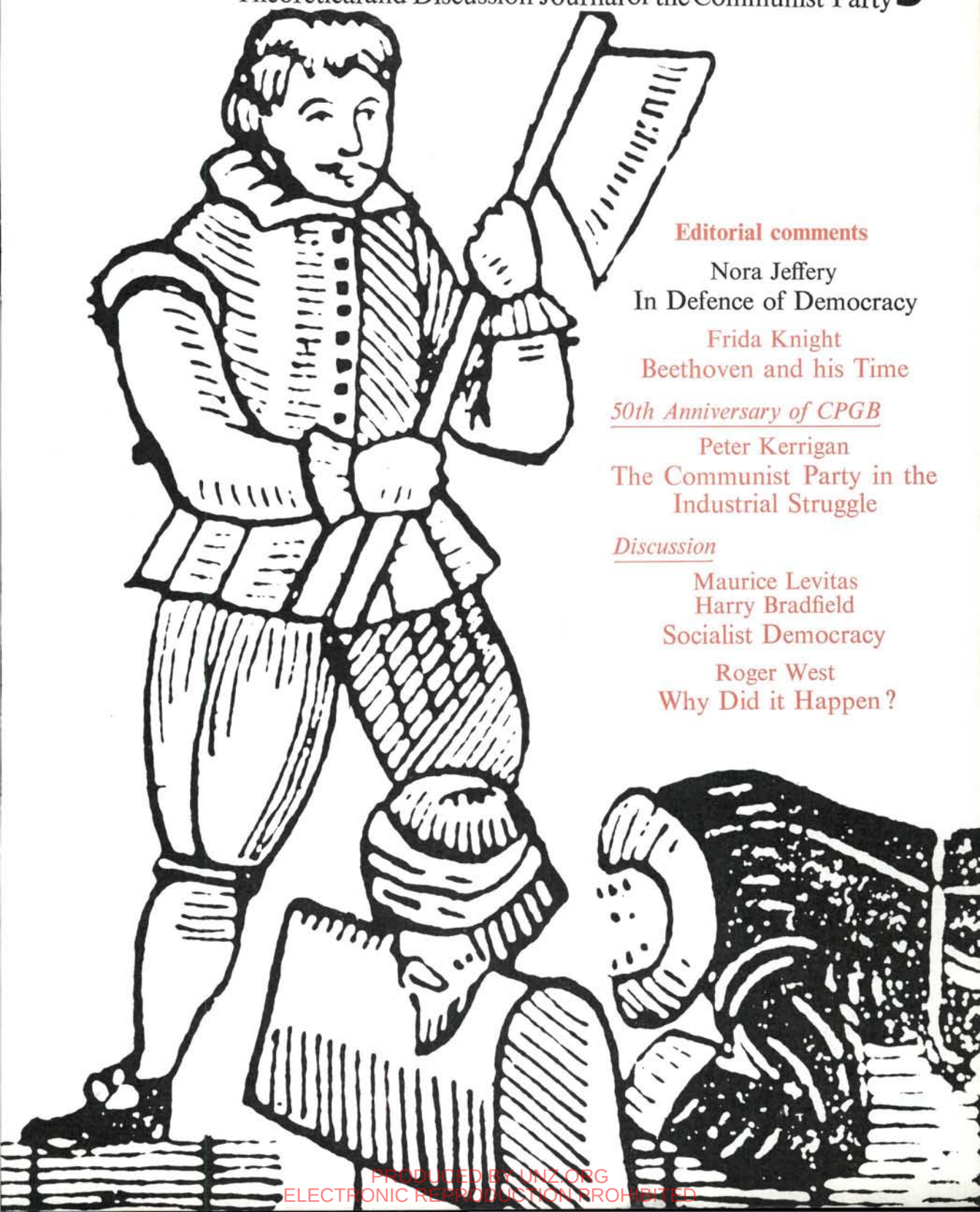
December 1970. Two shillings and sixpence

Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party



Editorial comments

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MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Volume 14 Number 12

Editor James Klugmann
Editorial Board Professor J. D. Bernal/Gabriel Carritt/Jack Cohen/Maurice Cornforth/Maurice Dobb John Foster/John Gollan/Arnold Kettle/John Mahon/Alan Morton/Bert Pearce/Michael Seifert/George Wake/Nick Wright

Editorial Correspondence James Klugmann, 16 King Street, WC2

Advertisements Doris Allison, above address

Orders and Subscriptions Usual agents or Central Books Ltd., 37 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1

Subscription rates Six issues 17s 6d Twelve issues 35s

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Editorial Comments

NINETEEN SEVENTY is ending in an atmosphere of widening struggle against the policies of the Tory Government. The local council workers have given Heath "a smack in the eye" and there are signs the miners will again take their traditional and rightful place in the forefront of working-class struggle.

The conference in defence of trades unionism held by the Liaison Committee on November 14th was the biggest event of its kind we can recall and, at the time of going to press, there is every sign that on December 8th, the day of national protest against the Tories, large numbers of workers all over Britain will strike and thousands will be at the House of Commons to express to the MP's their anger and protest at Tory policies.

The width of the movement is significant. Who would have dreamed the Archbishop of Canterbury and the majority of the Church of England bishops would publicly oppose the Tory Government's proposal to sell arms to Voerster's apartheid regime?

Of course the movement is still a very long way from reaching the level required to compel the Tories to withdraw their anti-union measures and cuts in the social services. The potential is enormous, Barber's so called mini-budget will leave ninety per cent of the population worse off. Not only the low paid, the pensioners and other poorer sections will suffer as a result of it but all workers in industry and the great majority of those employed in the professions as well as many small businessmen will be worse off.

New possibilities of building a broad alliance of anti-monopoly forces exist. Such an alliance could compel changes in current policies and open the way for more basic changes. The fundamental questions regarding the future of society, raised by the government's policies and the potential resistance to them, is certainly not lost on the ruling class. The Guardian's first editorial (November 9th) was headed "Can we beat Karl Marx"? It is sufficient to add that the writer was not over-optimistic about the chances.

Readers of *Marxism Today* need no telling that Karl Marx cannot be beaten by capitalist ideas and policies. For them, the issue is to play their part in building the widest movement and seizing the many new opportunities of showing the need for and the way to win fundamental socialist change.

PARIS COLLOQUIUM

From October 31st to November 2nd a colloquium was held at Paris, organised by the Maurice Thorez Institute on the subject of "the 50th Anniversary of the French Communist Party and the penetration into France of the ideas of Lenin". It was attended not only by delegates from France but from 29 foreign Communist and Workers' Parties, including, from Britain, the Editor of "Marxism Today".

The discussion was opened by five main reports—Claude Willard on "The Origins of the French Communist Party"; Victor Joannes on "Lenin's Teachings on the Necessity of a Vanguard Party"; Etienne Fajon on "The French Communist Party and Marxist-Leninist Theory"; Georges Cogniot on "The Role of Maurice Thorez in Introducing Leninism to France" and Roland Leroy on "The French Communist Party and National Culture".

The discussions were wound up by an important statement of Georges Marchais, the Assistant General Secretary of the Party. We hope to inform our readers more in detail on these discussions in later issues.

Speaking of the origins of the Party, Claude Willard spoke of the general background on which the Party was formed,—World War I, the effects of the October Revolution, the stormy post-war years of 1919-20, a background with which there are, naturally enough, many parallels with the formation of the British Party. He spoke of the effect of the translation of Lenin's speeches and writings. (Incidentally a fascinating detailed report of these successive translations was given in one of the Commissions by Lucien Sève, the new head of the publishing house, "Editions Sociales",

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and author of important works on philosophy and psychology).

Willard spoke of the growing militancy of the French working class that preceded the formation of the Party (the number of strikers rose from 176,000 in 1918 to 1,317,000 in 1920).

He spoke of the many different groups and trends that went to make up the new Party—of the little French group in Moscow, hardly 20 people, but including Inessa Armand, Jacques Sadoul, and Henri Guilbeaux, of the anarcho-syndicalist branch like that of the 'Vie Ouvriere' group who were striving for 'an alliance of syndicalism and bolshevism', of the Clarte movement (which contained right-wingers before moving left) of which Paul Vaillant Couturier was a member and, of course, Henri Barbusse.

One of the most important sections of the Report was Willard's analysis of the development of the French Socialist Party (SFIO) in this period. At its Strassburg Congress of February 1920, a resolution of support for remaining affiliated to the 2nd International only received 7 per cent of the votes, whilst a resolution for affiliating to the Third International received more than one third.

CONGRESS OF TOURS

At the National Congress of the SFIO held at Tours from December 25-29, 1920, the battle was renewed on affiliation to the Third (Communist) International. Marcel Cachin's Resolution for joining the C.I. received 3,208 votes, the centrist resolution of Longuet 1,072. The voting for the left wing, centrists and right wing was approximately 68.7, 22.9, and 8.4 per cent respectively.

Thus by a large majority the official Socialist Party joined the Third International. By the end of 1921, the Communist Party as it was now called, had over 100,000 members. This was very different from the conditions of formation of the CPGB.

Of course there were many difficulties yet to be faced. There were still many different trends struggling within the young Communist Party.

It was, in the words of Willard, at first a "strange cocktail". And he quoted an early article of the "Cahiers du Bolshevisme (Nov. 28, 1924) describing the trends as "20 per cent Jauresism, 10 per cent Marxism, 20 per cent Leninism, 20 per cent Trotskyism and 30 per cent Confusionism".

The battle to transform the Party into a real revolutionary Communist Party still had to be waged. The Party still had to become the mass working class Marxist-Leninist Party that it is today.

As Claude Willard said towards the end of his Report:

> "Despite all the ambiguities, all confusions, the 100,000 founders of the French Communist Party to one or another extent felt this event as it were as a command of history fulfilling a deep indispensable need to renew the French working class and socialist movement. History has proved them correct."

ROLE OF MAURICE THOREZ

In this task of transformation of the French Party no-one played a greater role than Maurice Thorez, who became its General Secretary in 1930. No-one, as Georges Cogniot well showed in his Report, contributed more to the task (in Thorez' own words) of 'the fusion of the national working class movement with Marxism-Leninism'.

Cogniot spoke of the different aspects of the contribution of Thorez—in the first place his work (in the realm of theory and practice) on the leading role of the Party; secondly (again by his practical and theoretical activity) his fight for working class and popular unity; thirdly his effort to elaborate the specific road by which France could advance to Socialism.

Cogniot dwelt on two aspects of Thorez' contribution (both of which had considerable influence in the 1930's on our own Party).

Maurice Thorez taught, he said:

> "that we should consider the struggle for democracy as an integral part of the struggle for Socialism. He showed that the struggle for democracy does not hinder but, on the contrary, brings nearer the fulfilment of the principal mission of the working class—the ending of the capitalist regime."

At the 10th Congress of the Party in June 1965 Thorez defined democracy as a 'continuous creation', a thought which, in a sense, prepared the way for his formulation of the possibility of finding a road of advance to Socialism based on the general approaches of Marxism-Leninism, but appropriate to French conditions, a formulation which, incidentally, he first made in an Interview with *The Times* on November 17, 1946.

The other aspect was Thorez' conception (in the Lenin tradition) of the unity of proletarian internationalism and genuine popular patriotism. He considered, explained Cogniot:

> "internationalism and independence, national responsibility and international responsibility, as two aspects of a single whole, two aspects dialectically joined."

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THE PARTY AND CULTURE

The Report by Roland Leroy on "The French Communist Party and National Culture" discussed the definition of culture, traditional French revolutionary approaches to cultural questions, the history of the Party's attitude to such questions, cultural problems of contemporary France.

There was a highly interesting section on the basis for an alliance of the working class and the intellectual forces of France. French Marxists, in general, use the term "intellectual" in a broad sense to include, for instance, engineers and technicians, teachers and research workers, writers and artists, doctors, architects, lawyers.

Leroy spoke in strong critical terms of modern right-wing revivals of "technocracy" in France, the attempt to glorify technical development as a thing itself out of context of property or production relations, and the claim that both capitalist and socialist society were "outdated conceptions" to be replaced by a new type of "industrial" or even "post-industrial" society.

He turned then to criticise what he defined as "leftist theses" on culture. We refuse, he said:

> "mechanically to assimilate art into politics, to reduce the function of art to the illustration of political ideas . . .
>
> ". . . We combat every pretention to forbid art to explore any section of social life. Artists must be able, with free expression of their imagination, their taste, their originality, and in the continuous confrontation of schools and styles, to express all aspects of contemporary reality . . ."

But on the other side, he continued:

> "We do not, of course, want the artist as an artist to cut himself from his life as a social man, a citizen. On the contrary we hope, to adopt a phrase from the Resolution of the Central Committee of March 1966 (at Argenteuil), that 'all creative workers will understand and support the ideology and political positions of the working class'.
>
> "Certainly we know that there can be no complete separation between the man as citizen and as artist. The philosophical, ethical, political thought that animates the citizens cannot be without influence on the artist's view of the world.
>
> "But no-one can nor ought to try to decide for the artist his aesthetic approaches."

Speaking on the natural sciences Leroy explained that:

> "The development of science necessitates debate and research. The French Communist Party has no intention of in any way hindering the development of such debates nor of bringing to them some *a priori* truths, and still less of making decisions in an authoritarian manner on discusions which are taking place amongst specialists".

INITIATIVE IN THE SOVIET UNION

One of the cherished illusions about life in the Soviet Union, carefully encouraged by the mass channels of misinformation, is that individual initiative is sternly suppressed. During the last three years a movement has been on foot at Tashkent, in the heart of Soviet Central Asia, which somehow doesn't square with that. In 1967 a student meeting at the Institute of Foreign Languages there decided to try and get together a Museum of the History of the British Communist Party, and later a library attached to the Museum. Within a few months the energetic chairman of the organising committee, Ivan Melenevsky—once a member of the British YCL—had received some leaflets and pictures of demonstrations from Party branches.

By constant correspondence with district committees of the CPGB, editorial offices and individual Communists, he now reports that nearly 700 exhibits have been received—books, pamphlets, leaflets, photographs, and much else. The students' aim of opening the Museum by Lenin's 100th anniversary and the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party has been attained. Comrade Melenevsky sends excerpts from a number of appreciations in the visitors' book, mainly by groups of students and senior classes of various schools in Tashkent. A typical entry was this, by members of class I (b) at School No. 110: "We express our sincere thanks to those who built up this Museum. It will help Soviet youth to get a deeper knowledge of the courageous battle of British Communists and YCLers. We declare our solidarity with the just cause of the Communist Party of Great Britain".

Students of the English Faculty of the Institute wrote: "A splendid idea! We have learned much about the life and struggle of the people whose language we are studying. This Museum will promote the further strengthening of peace and friendship between the peoples". It is worth recalling that Tashkent is a city where between 1917 and 1920 British Secret Service Officers were trying to stir up rebellion against the Soviet Government. The Museum would be glad to get further material for its display.[1]

BEETHOVEN BI-CENTENARY LECTURE

As a contribution to this Bi-Centenary the Music Group of the Communist Party organised a public event in the Purcell

[1] Melenevsky's address is: House 24, Flat 4, Chilanzar K-2, Tashkent 115, USSR.

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Room on October 26th. This took the form of an illustrated lecture with the title *Beethoven—Genius, Creator, Revolutionary* by Ernst Hermann Meyer, one of the leading composers of today and Emeritus Professor of the Humboldt University of Berlin. The hall seating 375 was sold out and more than fifty people were unable to gain admission.

The lecture was illustrated on the piano and with tape-recorded excerpts, taken from the remarkable Complete Edition of Beethoven's Works now being issued on gramophone records by the VEB Deutsche Schallplatten Berlin as a contribution to the Bi-Centenary Celebrations of the German Democratic Republic. In this Complete Edition are included hundreds of Beethoven's compositions, never previously available on disc.

It was the great merit of Professor Meyer's lecture that he related Beethoven's musical creations to the composer's attitude towards the social and political events of his lifetime. Beethoven was nineteen when the French Revolution broke out. In 1789 he was still living in his home town of Bonn, supporting two younger brothers by his earnings as composer, pianist, organist, viola player and teacher; at the same time he was enrolled as a student at Bonn University and heard lectures on literature and philosophy; he also listened to Professor Eulogius Schneider, a former Franciscan monk who had left the Order to become a passionate supporter of the ideals and concrete achievements of the French Revolution.

To quote from the lecture: "Beethoven has set for us an example of greatness *as a man, as an active participant in the historical struggles and changes of his era,* and *as a creative musician*". Professor Meyer quoted from a letter from this period in which he wrote: "If things turn out to be more favourable in our homeland my art shall serve only the well-being of the poor". Nearly twenty years later when at the height of his fame he wrote: "Yet from my childhood I have striven to understand what the better and the wiser among the people of every age have expressed in their works. Shame on the artist who does not consider it his duty to achieve at least as much". After the Peace Treaty of Vienna he wrote in 1817: "As for me, my health has been undermined for a considerable time. *The condition of our country* has been partly responsible for this; and so far no improvement is to be expected, nay, rather every day there is a further deterioration". This was during the period of Metternich's police repressions in the whole of Austria.

The event was indeed a worth contribution to the Beethoven Bi-Centenary. It pointed the way to a deeper understanding of the creations of this greatest composer that mankind has so far brought forth.

THE HUNGRY HALF

A new paperback by Idris Cox, published by Lawrence and Wishart[2], contains a factual and therefore profoundly disturbing account of the appalling condition of poverty and hunger in which over half the world's population is existing, and of the causes of the perpetuation of these conditions in imperialist exploitation.

"This fact has aroused the moral indignation of millions in Britain and other capitalist countries", he writes. "Yet charitable motives and moral indignation are not enough". For all who are disturbed by the condition of the majority of the human race today this book provides a summing up of the facts and a clear lead as to what has to be done to remedy them. Much has been written on the problem, but hitherto there has been no one book which thus presents it and sums it up.

In little more than a hundred pages, Idris Cox presents the salient facts of world hunger, shows how imperialism causes and exploits it, exposes the fictions of "economic aid", and shows what we in Britain can do.

[2]*The Hungry Half, a Study in the Exploitation of the "Third World"*, by Idris Cox. 122 pp. Lawrence & Wishart, London, 75p. (15s.).

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In Defence of Democracy

Nora Jeffery

The attack on trade union rights, launched first by Wilson's Government and now, in even severer form, by Heath's, is the most open and sharp expression to date of the process of undermining democracy that has been taking place in Britain over many years. It is part of a general growth of authoritarianism.

Britain is not unique in this. The same process is to be seen in other capitalist countries, though not necessarily in the same form. In France and the United States governments have moved to the right and democracy is under attack. In Italy fascist plots have been uncovered; in Greece fascism has come to power.

Monopoly versus Democracy

It was Lenin's view that the development of monopoly capitalism led to the growth of political reaction. Writing in *A Caricature of Marxism* in 1916 he said:

> "Economically imperialism (or the 'era' of finance capital—it is not a matter of words) is the highest stage in the development of capitalism, one in which production has assumed such big, immense proportions, that free competition gives way to monopoly. That is the essence of imperialism. . . . The political superstructure of this new economy of monopoly capitalism (imperialism is monopoly capitalism) is the change *from* democracy *to* political reaction. Democracy corresponds to free competition. Political reaction corresponds to monopoly".

Readers of this journal know at what a furious pace the growth of monopoly has gone on in Britain. John Gollan pointed out at the 31st Congress of the Communist Party that between 1963 and 1968 mergers brought about a fall of one third in the number of companies in manufacturing. Press headlines for the first half of this year show the trend continuing in all sectors of industry—"Government agree Reed Group to take over IPC in £225m. agreed deal" (*Times* 24/1/70); "New call to concentrate electronics" (*Times,* 21/3/70); "Approval for ICI's textiles merger plan" (*Times,* 26/3/70); "Major fertiliser makers discuss joint operations" (*Times,* 31/3/70); "Trust houses and Forte in surprise merger" (*Times,* 4/5/70); "Met. Estate and Hill Samuel join in £200m. merger" (*Times,* 1/7/70).

This process has led to an unprecedented concentration of power in the hands of a few great monopolists. They dominate the economic, political and cultural life of the country. The very nature of their aim—the acquisition of further power to win the highest possible private profit—is utterly opposed to the aims of democracy. What is in the interests of the few is against the interests of the majority. The monopolies operate in an anti-democratic way. (Why this is so, needs more theoretical analysis by us.) Moreover in a world of rapid change, where socialism has become a living reality, where millions of people are fighting for their national liberation to free themselves from the clutches of imperialism, and where every capitalist country faces crisis of some kind, the handful of rich, tenacious of their power, are forced, in the fight to retain that power, to greater repression.

The monopolists need to impose their will on every section of public life. Parallel with the growth of their control over the country, economically, politically and ideologically, has gone a steady, insidious attack on democracy.

In this article I propose to look at what has been happening in Britain in this way, though this can only be in a general fashion, for the field to be covered is very wide indeed. Civil liberties, the institutions and processes of government, the growth of the civil service, local government, the law and the police, the press and television, higher education and academic freedom, the menace of racialism and Powellism, the ultra-right—so wide is the field. Here I can only deal with one or two aspects of what is a subject of the greatest importance for the progressive movement. But I hope that this will lead to further study and other articles, for we need to be thoroughly aware of the scale of the attack being made against democracy, in order to arouse vigilance and help develop in the best possible way the struggle to defend it. For the trend towards authoritarianism is not an irreversible process. Our democratic rights were forced from the ruling class in struggle. Whenever attempts have been made to filch them from us, the people have fought back, often with great success; and the movement to defend them, if it is united and clear in its aims, can halt the present attacks and widen out into a great advance for democracy and socialism.

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Racialism

The ruling class will do its utmost to prevent such a united people's movement coming into being, and a major weapon in its efforts to do this is racialism. Above all it will aim to split the working class, the section of the people best organised to develop opposition against it. If the ruling class can set skilled workers against unskilled they will; or English against Irish; or Protestants against Catholics.

There are many variations of the theme. Before the war it was the Jews. Today it is black people, a minority group, easily distinguishable by their physical characteristics. If only white workers can be set against black workers, then the forces of opposition can be divided and confused, and the ruling class will have found a scapegoat to blame for all the social evils which arise from the present capitalist society, and which capitalism is unable to solve. The more easily distinguishable the minority group, the easier it is to play on fears, rouse violent emotions and hatred with expert demagogy, among unthinking, uninformed people.

We need a full study of Powellism. We have to rebut racialism with the utmost vigour, not just when it hits the headlines in a new speech or a specially bad incident, but continually in the factories and localities. It is absolutely essential for the growth of unity among all people whose interests are opposed to those of the rich, that this poison is exposed and rooted out.

The Attack on the Unions

When we survey the whole field of democratic rights and liberties, it is not surprising that the attack is so sharp on trade union rights. One of the most important developments in recent years in Britain has been the new militancy in the unions, the great change in the attitude of professional workers to industrial action and trade unionism and the fighting mood of the lower paid workers. New left progressive leaderships have emerged. Previous divisions between sections of workers are being healed. The unions are beginning to demand a say in more than wages and conditions. Workers' control is being discussed far more. All this is anathema to the ruling class. They want tame trade unions, brought within the scope and confines of capitalist law. If they can cripple the power of the organised workers in the factories, they will find it all the easier to impose ever more reactionary policies.

This aspect of the attack on democratic rights has been excellently examined in many of our articles. All that needs to be said here is that what is at stake affects not only trade unionists. The struggle to defeat the proposed anti-trade union legislation has the most profound importance for the whole people; for if the Tory Government can achieve their aims here, they will be in a far stronger position, not only to drive down wages, but to bring in a far more reactionary type of government, should they so wish.

One of the problems today is that by and large, people tend to take democracy for granted, unless, as in the case of the unions, any attacks on it directly affect their lives. Many people remain unaware of how much our civil liberties are being whittled away, have come under attack. The ruling class cannot tolerate dissent, either by students, tenants, strikers or anyone else voicing a protest against the present system or its policies. This they fear like the devil, and are determined to curb.

Tory "Law and Order"

In the post war years freedom to travel in and out of the country has often been seriously interfered with. Certain categories of civil servants are subject to a totally undemocratic screening process. Court injunctions have been increasingly sought by employers to stop solidarity action. There have been startling cases of police action against workers on picket line duty, against squatters and tenants, students and other protesters.

Serious alterations of a reactionary character have been made in the law in the last few years. The Criminal Justice Act introduced majority verdicts. This was strongly criticised at the time, and there is no doubt that some would like to see this as a first move towards abolishing juries altogether. This Act also, in dealing with the right to bail in summary cases to be heard by magistrates, lists eight exceptions which in fact continue to leave matters in the hands of magistrates and the police. Many people concerned with the practice of the law find this very worrying. The Criminal Law Act sets out certain categories for which arrest without warrant may be made, and the Dangerous Drugs Act gives the police new powers of search. Truly our civil liberties are shrinking.

Their maintenance depends in great part on preventing any increase in the powers of the police and the courts. Yet there is evidence of a more than unusually repressive trend on the part of both. The 1969 annual report of the National Council for Civil Liberties commented on the increasing use of binding over procedure on people not charged with offence, particularly to hamper or prevent political and trade union demonstration. The 1970 annual report speaks of the many instances of magistrates accepting police objections to bail without any evidence or reasonable

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grounds, and of the setting of sureties at an unduly high figure. And there have been some shockingly vicious sentences imposed on students and protesters.

This is part of a general attempt to clamp down on dissent, and the signs are that it is only the beginning. In April this year Lord Chief Justice Parker, using all the authority of his office, called for tougher punishment of criminals and for a national police force. He proposed to give the courts complete freedom in sentencing, and to allow magistrates to increase the present six months maximum sentence to 12 months.

This is not an isolated demand from a legal crank, but coincides with a general campaign by the Tory Party for greater "law and order", a campaign that rose to hysterical proportions before and during the last election. "Bring back the birch; bring back flogging; bring back the stocks; restore capital punishment". These were some of the war cries. When the demand for more "law and order" comes from the right we know that it is a call for more reactionary measures.

As on other questions Heath responded to this backwoods hullabaloo, and set out what he saw the next Tory government should do, in a speech to the Society of Conservative Lawyers on March 16th this year. It makes alarming reading. He had, he said, called on Sir Peter Rawlinson, since become Attorney General in the present government, to lead a study of present laws relating to demonstrations, public disorder and trespass, with a view to revising them. His aim, according to the report in the *Times* (17/3/70), was to see "whether we should create an offence of malicious or criminal trespass which will provide better redress against the wilful interruption and disruption of business or pleasure. Against violence and malicious damage we have some remedy, but against what is euphemistically called 'peaceful' —meaning wilful—disruption we have none". He wanted offenders, in addition to being fined, to be obliged at least partially, "to compensate their victims".

So a new category of crime should be invented to render impossible any large scale demonstrations.

The Tories were given a sharp rebuke in the *Law Society Gazette* of March 17th, 1970. "Are we more interested in a determined bid against crime, for which the criminal law as it stands at present is effective to deal with offenders when they are caught, or are we more interested in demonstrators be they pro or anti certain causes?" asked the journal. It commented: "Many people today want a tougher line taken with demonstrators. But they might well consider whether or not this would be the first step towards curtailment of freedom of speech if not the precursor of outright dictatorship".

Colour Discrimination

If the law is revised as Heath wants, and anti-union legislation introduced, this would represent a wholesale attack on our rights and liberties. It would mean a leap towards authoritarian rule.

One section especially of the British people has suffered loss of rights, the coloured people in Britain and coloured British citizens abroad trying to come to Britain. Black people first meet our laws when they decide to come here. This has now been made harder for many, impossible for great numbers. The European Commission on Human Rights has just condemned Britain for its degrading treatment of African-Asians. Those who do enter meet up with the law again, and there is plenty of evidence that they come up against a barrier of prejudice and obstruction at the point of entry. Here in the country many complain bitterly about police behaviour. And in spite of the Race Relations Acts which make incitement to racial hatred a crime, it seems virtually impossible to get a prosecution against a man like Enoch Powell whose speeches stir up race hatred.

Any discussion of the threat to civil liberties must take note of the role of the police (and of the existence of several hundred private police organisations like "Securicor"). Lord Justice Parker wants a national force. That would only increase their power, which is far too great as it is. What is needed is much greater control over local forces by local councils, and over chief constables too, and an independent body to investigate complaints against the police.

Bypassing Parliament

From its early days the Labour movement has seen representation in Parliament as an essential part of its struggle for political advance. The Chartists fought for the extension of the franchise as a step towards working class representation in Parliament. In most great struggles the workers have demanded that their Parliamentary representatives speak out in support of their demands.

Parliament is a sovereign body with power to do what it wants, and given a majority with the will to do so there is nothing to stop this power being exercised. In real life the power of Parliament is overshadowed by the fact that decision-making has tended to become centralised in the Cabinet, working in association with the top civil servants and the most powerful vested interests.

Consequently Parliament's prestige has tended

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to decline, a fact which had been accompanied by pressure from important monopoly capitalist circles for a businessmen's government and attacks from the far right upon the value of Parliamentary government.

Most of those who are dissatisfied with Parliament's role today, are so because it seems only a talking shop, and not always a very lively one at that. And it is generally agreed by students of politics that over a long period Parliament's control over the Executive has steadily decreased. Richard Crossman in his introduction to the Fontana edition of Bagehot's *The English Constitution* (p. 46) puts it thus:

> "The fact remains that in a period when effective power in all spheres of life—economic, social, political—is being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, parliamentary control of the executive has been steadily decreasing without being replaced by other methods of democratic control".

This process goes back over many years in the course of which Government institutions have grown considerably in number and staffing, and a great centralisation of power has taken place. There would seem to have been two main reasons for this—the need by the ruling class to mobilise the national resources and whole people for two world wars, and their need to meet the demands of an increasingly strong working class movement for social services on a wide scale.

The Cabinet Secretariat set up in the first world war strengthened the Cabinet as a decision making body. Methods adopted then became permanent and enabled great use to be made of sub-committees of the Cabinet. This centralisation of power was increased still further in the second world war and continued by Attlee in the 1945 government. He maintained a large Cabinet Secretariat and an elaborate system of committees, so that decision-making rested largely in these committees or with the Prime Minister himself, in consultation often with people outside the Cabinet. This system still goes on; and working on or closely with the committees are representatives of big business and the top civil servants.

Not only has the power of the Executive grown enormously, so has that of the Prime Minister, who controls the governing party in the House of Commons and wields tremendous power of patronage, both inside the House and outside.

> "He is now the apex not only of a highly centralised political machine, but also of an equally centralised and vastly more powerful administrative machine. In both these machines, loyalty has become the supreme virtue, and independence of thought a dangerous adventure". (Richard Crossman, *Ibid*, p.51).

> "The modern Cabinet normally registers decisions already nine-tenths made and co-ordinates their implementation (and resigns itself to the fact that many of the most important decisions of Foreign Policy, Defence, Security, and Budgetary matters will have been made in its name by the Prime Minister without the least thought of prior and collective discussion). This change from a political decision-making body to an instrument of administrative co-ordination has been made possible and accelerated by the great and continued development both of standing Committees of the Cabinet (such as Defence, Home Affairs, Economic Policy, Future Legislation, Foreign Policy and Atomic Energy) and of the ad hoc committees which are constantly being set up to report on a particular problem". (*The Reform of Parliament*, Bernard Crick, p.37).

It was Wilson's declared intention to strengthen the Prime Minister's power. Humphrey Berkeley, in *The Power of the Prime Minister* (p. 49) quotes Wilson telling an interviewer in a television programme in January 1965: "I more than once said that I thought Number Ten should be a power house and not a monastery".

Centralisation of Power

Now comes Heath's decision to set up a Central Policy Review Staff in the Cabinet Office. The members of it are to be a mixture of administrators, businessmen, economists and other specialists, to act as a "countervailing force when the Cabinet is asked to reach a decision" (*Times*, 16/10/70). This will undoubtedly bring still greater power into the hands of the Prime Minister and take still more decisions beyond any public control.

Over the years really momentous decisions have been taken, without the consent of Parliament, or at times, the Cabinet. They include matters concerning the first H bomb, the cost of research and development of the first British atom bomb (Churchill, disclosing the cost in the House of Commons, said that as an old parliamentarian he was "rather astonished" that such a large sum "could be dispersed without Parliament being aware of it", *The British State* (p. 55)), the decision to allow US troops to be stationed here, the first post-war increased spending on armaments, and vital policy questions on Suez. George Brown's memoirs show Wilson's behaviour to be all of a pattern.

In the post-war period the Executive has been buttressed by a series of institutions and committees concerned with economic and industrial matters. In face of continued underlying crisis the state has felt the need to intervene more and more in the economy, to try to influence the rate of growth, the rate of investment, the level of wages

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and stimulate the "modernisation" of industry.

This kind of intervention was begun under the Tories, but carried much further by the Labour Government, who brought into government, either directly or indirectly, some of the most powerful businessmen of the country.

The present Tory Government's announcement that some of these institutions are to be dismantled does not mean any lessening of the centralised power of the Executive or the influence of big business. Already a core of business managers, headed by one of Shell's executives, has been brought in to strengthen the Civil Service. In addition Heath has continued the streamlining of Government Departments which was carried through under Wilson, so that there are now two huge empires in Whitehall, one dealing with local government, housing and construction and the transport industries; the other covering trade and industry. Businessmen head both, the most significant appointment being the former chairman of the Confederation of British Industries to the Department of Trade and Industry.

There has also been a very big increase of delegated legislation through statutory instruments. These are the means whereby the general terms of an Act of Parliament are given practical application in measures worked out by the Civil Service Department concerned. James Harvey and Katherine Hood in their book *The British State,* published in 1958, said that these instruments were being produced at the rate of 1,000 a year. The figure is certainly much higher now. An MP can move a prayer to annul a statutory instrument, but this power is very limited. Only Six days a session on average are devoted to this. Harvey and Hood comment that this process amounts to the "virtually uncontrolled making of laws by government departments and demonstrates the immense powers wielded by the senior permanent officials in the civil service".

The growth and bureaucratisation of the civil service merits an article in itself.

Reform of Parliament

Undeniably the life of a back bench left Labour MP must be a very frustrating one. There are very few private members' bills. Financial initiative rests solely with the Cabinet. The ordinary MP cannot move any resolution or amendment which entails new expenditure. And short of a tremendous campaign both outside Parliament as well as inside—as happened over *In Place of Strife*—it is very difficult if not impossible, to make any basic changes in Government Bills. Yet every MP knows how much consultation goes on outside the House with the powerful lobbies representing every important sector of industry, who are sounded out about new legislation that may affect their interests.

One of the ways in which the critical function of Parliament has been weakened has been through the increase in the numbers of MPs holding office of some kind or another. Bernard Crick *The Reform of Parliament* (p. 29) gives the following numbers:

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
42	59	71	76	83	95	101

About 111 were involved in Wilson's government. This is a very convenient way of nobbling critics and securing loyalty to government decisions.

We should not therefore be surprised that during the last ten years there has been considerable discussion and study about methods to reform Parliament; and that a strong feeling has grown among many MPs and others of the need to find ways of enabling Parliament to scrutinise the processes of government, exercise some control over the Executive, and break through the secrecy that shrouds the work of Ministers and Departments and keeps hidden important decisions. The greater the power that resides in government hands, the greater the need to turn on them the floodlight of public scrutiny.

Can Parliament become an effective force in controlling the Executive and making the Cabinet responsible to the House of Commons? Can back bench MPs play a bigger part in this direction? Questions like these are clearly not easy of solution, but they are matters of very deep democratic importance, which need to be studied and discussed.

Great hope was placed in Parliamentary circles on the extension of the select committee system, already operating, especially with the setting up of the first of the new specialised committees on Agriculture and Science and Technology. (These were followed by one on Science and Education and on Race Relations and Immigration.) These committees were to select items for examination; they were to probe and elicit information and, it was hoped, extend their work to consideration of policy. They came up against very real problems, among others of staffing and of co-operation—or perhaps non-co-operation—from Departments. The *Times* (13/3/69) thought that the reasons for closing the Agriculture Committee were so unconvincing as to suggest that it was doing its investigating too well.

The Tory Government are clearly not going to develop this system of specialist committees. They have put forward a compromise. The old Estimates Committee is to be enlarged into a Select Committee on Expenditure with powers to investi-

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gate the Government's spending commitments and to question Ministers on the policies underlying them. Two of the new specialist committees started under the Labour Government are to continue—those on science and technology and on race relations, but there is no proposal to set up any more.

A group of determined MPs could make the Select Committee on Expenditure an effective probing instrument but whether this will happen will depend, among other things, on whether the Committee gets proper staffing assistance and is allowed to scrutinise *all* aspects of expenditure and policy.

It is difficult to judge how successful this experiment was without a considered estimate from those who have been working on the committees. Those outside Parliament watching the experiment are divided about its value and results. (See *The House of Commons in Transition*, edited by A. H. Hanson and Bernard Crick.) I would have thought that anything which gave MPs a chance to probe the goings on of the Executive was to be encouraged to the utmost.

But the real answer to this problem lies surely elsewhere, in the struggle to change the whole composition and character of Parliament and the present electoral system. This is part of the class struggle, of our ability to combine the fight outside Parliament with that inside, to bring the full weight of the organised labour movement to bear on what is happening in Parliament, and, in the course of the struggle, to secure the election of a majority of Communist and Labour MPs. This struggle will be sharp, intense, prolonged and many sided, with the extra-Parliamentary action all important.

The Mass Media

This is what the *British Road to Socialism* sets out. Its strategy based on struggle, on the fullest use of all existing democratic forms and rights. Its aim is to develop a powerful movement in which all the democratic organisations become instruments for advance—economic, social and political—altering the relation of forces at every level of society, in favour, not only of immediate gains, but of fundamental change. This would inject new strength, new life and purpose into existing organisations, deepening their democratic character and giving new meaning to democratic rights. Undoubtedly new forms of action would arise and new rights be demanded to correspond with new stages of struggle. Fully establishing the power and authority of parliament we see as part of such a struggle.

No sector of industry is more important to the ruling class than the communications industry, and here a startling concentration of monopoly power has taken place, in newspapers and in television and recently in publishing. Fewer and fewer big business executives now decide what we shall all read and see and hear. Here is a whole industry devoted to the moulding of public opinion and public taste, almost entirely in the hands and serving the interests of, the ruling class.

The monopoly is not only vertical, but also horizontal. Newspaper owners have big interests in television; television magnates own publishing houses. And the signs are that this concentration will continue. We have seen the disappearance of the *News Chronicle*, *Reynolds News*, the *Sunday Dispatch* and *Sunday Graphic* and the London *Evening Star*. Now the Prices and Incomes Board has indicated (5/3/70) that four other national papers are facing difficulties.

So serious is this whole situation that early this year over 100 Labour and Liberal MPs tabled a Commons motion calling for a Royal Commission on the Communications Industry to work out measures for Government help. The Government answer was that this would be an enormous undertaking and that no case had been made out for it.

The ruling class fears like the plague dissenting ideas, anything that will show a realisable alternative to the present system. Now and then someone may write or suggest, as did the Pilkington Report, that sufficient opportunity must be given to the expression of minority views, and now and then a gesture is made. But the almost total freezing out of the Communist Party from both television and capitalist papers gives the lie to this.

Henry Fairlie summed up the BBC in *The Establishment* like this:

> "The BBC has done more than any other body to buttress the most conservative institutions in the country, to create and perpetuate reverence for the orders, privileges and mysteries of a conservative society. . . . What makes the influence of the BBC on the life and mind of the nation so baleful is the wash of 'gentle persuasion'. . . . It fears, and when it does not fear, it despises nonconformity; and if non-conformity must be allowed its say, it will gently rob it of all anger and all laughter, of all passion and heartache, until it lacks both pith and point."

The few occasions when this is not the case only serve to underline the general truth.

Huge personal fortunes have been made in commercial television out of the business of selling capitalist products and ideas. There was a period when dividends of 400 per cent were being paid to shareholders; and, though that time has passed, the present returns are very lucrative. In fact the main criterion of success of those who run the

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companies is the size of the dividend they can pay out. This is hardly surprising seeing that the boards of directors are crowded with big business representatives.

One of the most alarming things about this side of the industry is the secrecy that surrounds the taking of important decisions affecting the character of the institutions. In June 1967 the television companies came up for review. New franchises were to be granted. This was a matter of great public importance, yet the operation was entrusted to the Television Authority under the chairmanship of Lord Hill, and conducted in the utmost secrecy. People arriving to be interviewed and stake their claim had to enter through the back door of the authority's offices.

The Economist issued this warning about these procedures on June 3rd, 1967.

> "A uniquely curious event is unfolding in British public life. A statutory body is in process of deciding which 15 limited companies should be granted the monopoly right for six years to share a total annual income now running at £80 million which should (more or less) produce total annual pre-tax profits of something over £15 million . . . And yet this statutory body is being allowed to reach its decisions without any serious public discussion whatever. Hardly a word of fact, analysis or opinion appears in print. It is as if there was a conspiracy of silence in the British press."

Much the same points were raised in Parliament by several MPs.

Six weeks later, apparently without consulting the public in any way through its representatives, the Prime Minister appointed Lord Hill as the new Chairman of Governors of the BBC.

Procedures like this touch on the whole nature of democracy today. Television is a very powerful weapon and a dangerous one. At a time of crisis it could have a decisive influence. Is it now time that the Labour movement took a deeper interest in how these institutions are run, and began to demand the right for those engaged in a struggle for better conditions to put their case freely and fully to the public? Can we do more to develop our case for a fair share of television time? There are many problems here to discuss.

The Ultra-Right

Any consideration of the shift to the right, even of a general character, must include the ultra-right.

Within the Tory Party itself is the Monday Club, notoriously reactionary, and with 26 members in the present Parliament, nine more than in the last. Its role at present within the Tory Party is clearly to bring pressure for a shift further to the right. Its programme for the general election was a more extreme version of official Tory Party policy. Among these men Powell most certainly finds support. In a sharper crisis we could expect this club to play a more openly reactionary part.

Outside the Tory Party there is a collection of fascist and reactionary organisations — the National Front, which I will come back to; the Union Movement, Mosely's organisation, but a bit of a non-runner today; the British Movement, Colin Jordan's group, the National Democratic Party, a wealthy group based in East Anglia; the Association of British Peoples, run from Dorset; the Immigration Control Association; the Racial Preservation Society and a few others.

The largest of these groups is the National Front, formed in 1967 from the merging of the League of Empire Loyalists, the British National Party and the Greater Britain Movement. These have been more recently joined by the English National Party, the Association of British People (Birmingham) and many branches of the Racial Preservation Society. *Labour Research*, February 1970, contains a very good analysis of the Front, showing it to be led, behind a respectable sounding National Council, by a handful of well-known, experienced fascists. It publishes two papers which are well produced and easy to read.

Some of these groups set up "front" organisations, hoping to attract people they might not otherwise catch, and no doubt they try to infiltrate other organisations. The *Labour Research* article regards as one of the most worrying developments the degree of infiltration made by the Front into the Tory Party, and gives details of this.

Ruling Class and Fascism

It would be easy to exaggerate the importance of these organisations, but they need watching. There seems to be no doubt that the National Front is growing, has managed to poll well in a few areas, intends to contest on a wider scale and in the last year has come on to the streets on several occasions in planned demonstrations. There is evidence too that a serious effort is being made by all the main ultra-right organisations to come together in one national organisation, feeling that the time is now ripe for this.

Whether they are able to overcome their differences remains to be seen. How strong they grow will depend on many factors, on how the political and economic situation develops, on the support they get from ruling class circles, above all on the strength and unity of the working class.

The ruling class will try to resort to fascism if it is no longer able to rule within the framework of bourgeois democracy. Fascism is the last resort of the monopolists, faced with crisis and a grow-

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ing, revolutionary situation. To maintain their rule they abandon all pretence at democracy and turn to open, ruthless, dictatorship, to the suppression of the workers' democratic organisations. The form that fascism takes may vary from country to country. The existing fascist groups are not a direct threat at present. But they could play a very dangerous role in whipping up racial hatred and helping to create a climate of crisis, preparing the way for an ultra-right government. The only real safeguard against this is the building of a powerful, united people's movement, able to deal with any turn towards reaction that the capitalists may make.

Other Side of the Picture

Against this summary of the prevailing trend to the right it is necessary to set the other side of the picture, the fight back which has also been growing. It is fashionable in some labour circles today to talk of the political apathy of the people, their lack of interest in the big political questions.

This is much too simple an estimate. People may well show little interest in the varying propositions put to them, if they find little difference in any of them, and regard one package as useless to them as the others. If they have not yet, in their own experience, found a real alternative that makes sense, they do not know what can be done.

But this does not mean that they are going to sit down and take whatever is coming. The history of the last few years belies this. If we could gather together the total sum of action and protest over this period, we would, I am sure, be astonished. Tremendous battles have taken place in industry, with entirely new sections of workers coming forward to do battle. There have been campaigns on education, rents, and a mass of other social problems. In this period too the young, especially the students, have stormed into the public view, not only on their own academic grievances, but as well on important social and international matters. All this does not equate with apathy. The movement is still only small, compared with the needs of the day. But the foundations are there, and as Tory plans emerge, the movement will grow.

This situation puts great responsibilities on the Communist Party. We have to help the struggle grow in every direction, with bold, imaginative leadership, to use every democratic channel that exists, to challenge every single attack. But this will not be enough. We have also to put forward our socialist programme, to show how all aspects of struggle link. how the fight for democracy is not an end in itself, but a part of the fight for lasting, fundamental change, for ending capitalism and beginning the building of socialism. The workers can engage in tremendous battles, and win important victories. But unless the movement comes to understand the real nature of class forces and the capitalist state, and the need to end the present system completely, there will be no great advance.

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Communists openly campaign in the trade unions of which they are members for such decisions. But Communists reject the idea that they should set out to take over the unions to turn them into instruments to carry out Communist policy.

What is more, we Communists reject the idea that we have to capture "top" key trade union positions in key trade unions to succeed in our political objectives.

Our fight in the unions is to convince and win the members for political decisions that are in the members' interests and help the advance to Socialism. At our last Party Congress our General Secretary John Gollan put it this way:

> "The right wing Wilson/Jenkins/Castle concept is that of a labour movement devoid of socialist content, devoted to the role of a junior partner in capitalism, with the trade unions taking no part in the class struggle.
>
> "The Communist and left wing conception is of a labour movement seeking to win the working class and its allies in the struggle against the monopolies, with free, fighting trade unions, an expanding Co-operative movement and a radical programme of far-reaching social and democratic change now, which would take Britain in the direction of Socialism".

Now the British trade union movement faces a Tory Government whose declared intention is to introduce laws through Parliament, aimed by legal means to cripple and handicap the unions in their task of defending and advancing the interests of their members. This challenge will demand from all, and especially the Communists and those progressive forces inside the factories and unions whose united struggle has secured the present advances, an even greater effort in the future, in fact the greatest united mass actions which it has ever yet undertaken.

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Beethoven and His Time

Frida Knight

"In the world of art, as in the whole of our great creation, freedom *and* progress *are the main objectives".*

Ludwig van Beethoven
(Letter to the Archduke Rudolph,
29 July, 1819).

"Artistic creation today is unthinkable. Intellectual and artistic Hellenism which has been the inheritance of many generations of democratic Greeks is now in grave danger. For each free creative artist . . . shame and fear of the success of dictatorship gaining strength in the Greek spirit, destitutes him and deprives him of the liberty he most needs. This forms the basis of anguish and reproach which finally leads to death of inspiration and genuine intellectual work. Creation, above all an art of freedom, withers where a law of brutal force and violence reigns. Under such conditions I am proud and happy that a collection of my work should exist and yet remain banned".

Mikis Theodorakis
written at Zatouna, Arcadia, in the
Peloponnese, April 1969.

In his book on Beethoven Professor Donald Tovey very firmly warns the would-be researcher against investigating the life of a great composer.

> "I refuse to involve the reader in vulgar entanglements between the art and the artist's private or official life".—"To study the life of great artists is often a positive hindrance to the understanding of their works . . . A sense of duty imposed on a work of art from without is artistic insincerity".

And yet Tovey admits that "the style is the man"; and suggests that

> "Beethoven's sense of responsibility is an essential part of his musical style . . . his sense of duty was to preach . . . his music was in fact a supremely masterly and hopeful criticism of life."

Encouraged by this, one turns to Sir Hubert Parry:

> "The history of music . . . invariably illustrates the state of society and the conditions of thought of the people among whom it is produced . . . When some exceptionally splendid genius appears, who is fully in sympathy with the best tendencies of his day . . . he becomes as it were a prophet . . . He comes to be a leader instead of a mere illustrator of contemporary emotion".—"In a crisis of the utmost moment in the history of both literature and music, Beethoven serves as a link between the new and the old, accepts all that is best and purest in his art, renews and transforms it by the fervour and passion and sympathetic imagination of his naturally democratic disposition."

Parry, it would seem, was in favour of looking at the background.

And so to Richard Capell, in *Music and Letters,* 1927:

> "An art of the scope of Beethoven's appears to be conceivable only in an age possessed of a general faith in life. It is clear from his and every analogous case that widespread public, and not merely personal spiritual certainties are essential to the rearing of such structures . . .
>
> "If we try to measure the vividness and energy of the ever-living poets", says Mr. Capell, "Beethoven's will strike us as extraordinarily rich and full, for this reason, that he includes in his immortality the general life of his time . . . In passionately expressing into his music all he could of himself . . . he naturally put in what had gone to his making, the new sounds that reached him, the new winds of Europe."

If this is true—and in spite of Tovey, I believe it is—there is much to be learned about Beethoven by listening to those "new sounds" of his age, and something to be learnt about that age by listening to Beethoven.

One must of course accept that Beethoven by his birth and upbringing was a bourgeois; he was not a politician and could not have identified himself with a political movement of workers and peasants—but he felt passionately about justice and freedom, and was as advanced in his opinions as any man of his time. If he had not been so famous, he would certainly have been a victim of the oppression which followed the various upsurges of popular militancy after 1815: "It's a good thing", said one of his friends, "that the

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censor can't understand what you are saying in your music!"

We who feel the same way as Beethoven, however, may, listening carefully and in the light of his life experience, get the message which Metternich's censor was not able to understand.

Enlightenment

Beethoven was born in December 1770 into a Europe already questioning accepted doctrines of faith and government, and groping towards democracy. Maria-Theresa was still ruling the semi-feudal Holy Roman Empire, but after her death in 1780 there were significant changes: Joseph II, her son, introduced liberal educational and fiscal measures, gave rights to Jews and Dissenters, and even encouraged Freemasonry, whose members had been persecuted for their anti-Catholic views and their theistic secret rites. In the atmosphere of enlightenment of "Josephinismus", men discussed Rousseau and the *Encyclopédistes,* Schiller exalted freedom, Mozart composed *The Magic Flute*—openly "Masonic" with its symbolic "bound thirds" and massive chords, extolling Virtue and Reason and the Common Man.

A wind of change, originating in France, blew all through Austria and Germany, even touching the little town of Bonn where Beethoven was growing up, and where Maximilian, Joseph's brother, was Elector and in 1788 founded a liberal University remarkable for its encouragement of free discussion and progressive ideas.

Everybody knows that Beethoven was employed as a musician in the Elector's court from the age of eleven; what is not so generally known is that in 1769 he registered as a student in Bonn University, with his life-long friend Anton Reicha of Prague.

One of the teachers there was Dr. Eulogius Schneider, a former Franciscan monk who after leaving the order campaigned in fiery lectures, sermons and verse, in the cause of the French Revolution.

Like Dr. Richard Price, the distinguished English Unitarian who so enraged Burke by his sermon defending republican France, Dr. Schneider infuriated the Cologne ecclesiastics by using his pulpit to denounce "Fanaticismus" and clerical "Zeremonienkram" ("ritual rubbish"). He attacked the Church's riches and power; "One year of freedom is more useful than a century of despotism", he said, and enlarged on this in poems about the Victory of Truth, and the taking of the Bastille. Beethoven's name is on the list of subscribers in a book of his very radical poems published in Frankfurt in 1790.[1]

[1] Knepler. Musikgeschichte des 19 Jahrhunderts, Berlin 1961, p. 538-39.

Schneider saw to it that his pupils grasped the meaning of the Revolution. It is clear that the susceptible young Beethoven was lastingly influenced—for one finds in his notebooks as late as 1817 the same sentiments about freedom and human dignity, and almost the identical words used by Schneider in some of his 1789 sermons: such as, for instance, "Der echter Adel nur durch Grösse des Geistes und Güte des Herzens erlanget werde . . .", and, "Wo Freiheit ruhet, da ruhet Genie, und die Glückseligkeit".[2] Beethoven: "Only art and science exalt men to the point of divinity"—"I know of no other advantages of human beings than those which place them in the ranks of the good and the superior" (17 July 1812). "Peace and liberty are the most precious of all possessions" (1817).

That the young composer was thoroughly impregnated with these lofty principles is evident from his early choral work, the Funeral Cantata for Joseph II, who died in 1790, and an Ode on the accession of Leopold, a few months later. Both these works are reminiscent of the masonic music which Mozart was writing at about the same time; and the words are similar too, in their emphasis on the blessings of peace and human happiness. Incidentally this Ode contains words identical with those in the Ninth Symphony—"Stürzet nieder, Millionen" ("O ye millions, kneel before Him"). This can hardly be coincidence: it certainly suggests that Beethoven's mature faith had deep roots in 18th Century Enlightenment.

The same inspiration re-occurred at intervals all through his life; especially in his songs, for instance in the *Opferlied* (Sacrificial Song) which has a strongly "masonic" flavour. Beethoven set this deeply devotional little hymn four times, in 1794, 1802, 1807 and finally in 1823 when he added an elaborate orchestral accompaniment and the words

> "Be ever Freedom's sword and shield. Thy life spirit breathe
> Through earth, air, fire and water"

surely an echo of Tamino's passage through flood and fire in *The Magic Flute,* Beethoven's favourite opera.

The Search for Freedom

This contemplative calm is typical of the too little known vocal works such as the settings to Gellert's *Gesellige Lieder,* and the *Elegie* of 1815, which describe Man's feelings towards his Creator; it is typical too of the intensely religious, non-dogmatic deism of his time which enabled

[2] Trans: "True nobility can only be reached through greatness of spirit and goodness of heart". "Where Freedom is, there are genius and blessedness of spirit".

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Beethoven to write music for the Mass with the sense of taking the words out of the Church and setting them free. The search for spiritual liberation, and indeed for freedom in every form were Beethoven's preoccupation, as his whole life shows.

It was basically to find freedom and independence that he went to Vienna in the autumn of 1792. In a personal sense he succeeded, though politically he was disappointed. Joseph's influence was waning. The new Emperor Francis I, who had succeeded Leopold after the latter's short reign, had declared war on France and set the stage for twenty-three years of hostilities, with all that this was to mean in civil and individual restriction.

Beethoven left Bonn in November, when the French armies were heading towards the Rhine, and on his way met the Hessian divisions marching to confront them. He scribbled in his notebook that he only tipped his driver "one small thaler" because the fellow drove like the devil right through the Hessian ranks".[3] It was the first of many times that he heard the tramp of marching soldiers and the rhythm of galloping cavalry, later to sound through so much of his music.

In 1792 Vienna, despite the war, "Josephinismus" was still fashionable in some circles, and *The Magic Flute* was being played in the theatre. Although, in general, music was the prerogative of the aristocracy, all sorts of people attended the concerts in great private houses, and the princely patrons, such as Beethoven's good friends Lichnowsky and Lobkowitz, were (a contemporary tells us) not at all snobbish: "there was no trace of coercion—they made no distinction in rank or dress".

Beethoven's ideas about freedom were not thought outrageous, and in 1794 he could still write in a friend's album "Love liberty above all things—never deny the truth even at the foot of the throne". But things were beginning to change. In spite of the Emperor's relative success against the French armies in the Netherlands (where Austrian troops under his personal command won the battles of Cateau and Tournay) France was a dangerous enemy, and her republican supporters everywhere a security risk. The refusal of the States of Brabant to give him necessary subsidies for anti-French measures increased Francis' suspicion that almost everywhere Jacobinism lurked, and back in Austria he set his police on suspects.

As in England, where a series of political trials was in progress, the authorities were very jittery; and like London, where the Corresponding Society was organising anti-war activity, Vienna had its subversive groups, its "Unions of Democrats" on the pattern of the French "Sociétés de l'unité et de la liberté", putting forward demands for the abolition of nobles' privileges, for civil rights, and an end to the war against France.

There were similar organisations in Hungary calling for freedom and independence from Austrian rule. In 1794 the leaders were arrested; there were secret trials, and in Vienna one, and in Budapest seven, of the most active were beheaded, the rest sentenced to life imprisonment in the fortress of Spielberg and Brünn.

Beethoven was well aware of all this: he wrote to a friend, in August 1794, that

> "they have been arresting several important persons; they say that a revolution was about to break out—but I believe that as long as the Austrians have brown beer and sausages they never will revolt. They say that the gates to the suburbs are to be locked at 10 o'clock every night. The soldiers keep *their guns well loaded. You must not talk too* loudly, or the Police will give you lodgings for the night."

He could say this to friends, but it would have been unwise to air his libertarian ideas in public. He was anyway too busy establishing himself as a composer and virtuoso pianist to spend much time on politics. But we know from his correspondence that his convictions remained firm; the fate of "politicals" stuck in his mind and at last found musical expression in his opera *Fidelio* (the subject of which, of course, is the rescue of a captive from a dungeon by his loving wife). The famous Prisoners' Chorus is even—or perhaps more than ever—today, intensely moving in its evocation of despair, as the prisoners return to the cells after a glimpse of blessed light. The theme from the 1790 Funeral Cantata "Da stiegen die Menschen ans Licht" re-appears significantly in the *Finale* of *Fidelio*.

New Departures

Between 1794 and 1798, Beethoven's feelings about freedom were mainly expressed in his breaking down of barriers in musical composition. His striking originality had already shown itself in bold new touches and dramatic effects, and now set out to explore new musical country, disregarding convention and experimenting boldly in form and harmony.

Haydn, his teacher at the time, advised him against publishing his trio (Op. 1 No. 3) in C minor, as being altogether too daring—but the pupil defied the master and went ahead. His six early quartets (Op. 18) were also strange to ears used to the law-abiding music of Haydn and Mozart, and many listeners must have complained, as Silvio Pellico once did to Stendhal, of

[3] Thayer, Vol. I.

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"uncouth and startling leaps when the melody lurches from one note to the next".[4] Stendhal's reply is worth recalling:

> "Are we then never to hear anything startling? If you want to make discoveries you must occasionally allow your ships to venture into uncharted waters. If the 'uncouth' had been forbidden by law, how could Beethoven with his wild impetuosity and his outlandish music have been there to catch up the torch as it fell from the hands of the measured and noble Haydn?"

Beethoven was however by no means always "outlandish". He composed plenty of "Hausmusik", piano sonatas and variations for young ladies, love songs and canons, and potboilers for special occasions; among the latter is a song for the Austrian Volunteers (1796) and his Austrian Battle Song (1797)—both of more historic than musical interest.

The Emperor had suppressed local agitators but he had not stopped the French armies. These were in 1796 advancing towards Austria from Italy where, under Napoleon, they had been winning battle after battle—Mondovi, Lonato, Bassano, Arcola, Rivoli. Francis called up volunteers—hence Beethoven's songs—to no avail. In October the peace of Campo Formio was signed, and Austria (having lost much of northern Italy) breathed again, for two years.

The Eroica

For a few months of that time Count Bernadotte resided in Vienna as French ambassador, surrounded by cultured Parisians, including the violinist Kreutzer. Beethoven was a frequent visitor to the Embassy and learnt much first-hand about revolutionary France; he got to know the choral and orchestral music which was performed in Paris at great popular occasions; bits of Gossec's and Cherubini's republican marches and choruses (sometimes sung at meetings by over 2,000 voices) are echoed in many of Beethoven's later works, particularly in the 7th and 9th symphonies. Beethoven made friends with Bernadotte, and there is a legend that the latter suggested the composition of a symphony in honour of Napoleon. Unfortunately for the story, this is unlikely; Bernadotte was at that time far from enamoured of Napoleon who distrusted him, had recently withdrawn forces from his command, and ordered him to fly the Tricolor over the Embassy—a gesture which resulted in a street riot and the withdrawal of Bernadotte from Vienna.

Whatever the relations between Bernadotte and Napoleon, Beethoven liked the former and admired the latter. Even after war broke out again, in May 1800, and an Austrian defeat at Marengo was followed by the humiliating Peace of Luneville, Beethoven remained firmly pro-republican. But his faith in Napoleon was suddenly shaken in May 1804, when he was told that the First Consul had made himself Emperor. In a burst of fury and disappointment he tore up the title-page of the Eroica with its dedication "To Luigi Bonaparte" exclaiming. "Is he then nothing more than an ordinary human being? Now he too will trample on the rights of man and indulge only his own ambition. He'll exalt himself above everybody else—he'll become a tyrant!"

Beethoven did not alter a note of the symphony, though he rededicated it "To the Memory of a Great Man". He still believed in the principles of the French Revolution, and the Eroica is a declaration of his belief—in form and spirit as revolutionary an utterance as the Marseillaise.

The truce years, 1800 to 1802, were for Beethoven a time of great unhappiness. Driven inwards through illness and the misery and embarrassment of his deafness, he avoided society, foreign or Austrian.

But during the following years he determinedly took himself back into social life; he was no longer to be a virtuoso pianist, but a dedicated composer, and it was his most prolific period. He was still not anti-French; even when war broke out yet again in 1804, he met Republican officers in Vienna, dined with them and played through Gluck's operas to their singing. He dedicated the Sonata in A major to the Parisian, Kreutzer; he did not even object to *Fidelio* being performed to a theatre full of French soldiers, in 1805, after the occupation following the battle of Ulm.

A New-Found Patriotism

In 1806 however we know that there was a change in his attitude. It was partly due to Napoleon's apostasy, and also to the terrible bloodshed at Austerlitz, in December, with the devastating defeat of the Austrian army. Beethoven began to feel himself an Austrian patriot, and described himself as such in his letters. He refused Prince Lichnowsky's request to play to French officers (and was almost arrested as a result). He addressed Camille Pleyel as "Dear Camillus—that was the name of the Roman who chased the wicked Gauls out of Rome: I too should like to have that name if I could chase them away from all the places to which they don't belong!"

And on hearing of Napoleon's victory at Jena in October 1806 he exploded: "If I were a general and knew as much about strategy as I do about counterpoint I'd give you fellows a thrashing!"

Having convinced himself that Napoleon was

[4] Life of Rossini. p. 60

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an imperialist adventurer bent on annexing Europe, Beethoven identified himself with those resisting the conqueror. He was still hostile to the Austrian ruling class, refused to kowtow to royalty, jeered at the "many rich folk who betray inward poverty". But all Austrians—nobility and plebs alike—were in the same boat vis-à-vis the French at this time, and Beethoven was in it too, bitterly resenting the humiliating conditions imposed by the Treaty of Lunéville, and the conscription of young Germans into the French army --Beethoven's friend Ferdinand Ries was packed off from Vienna, and he himself was lucky to be over recruiting age.

His newly born patriotism stimulated Beethoven's creative genius, and the so-called Third Period is rich in works of a heroic character—including Egmont, Coriolan, Prometheus, which depict heroic figures in struggle against adverse forces.

One effect of the war was simply physical: a sensitive artist was bound to be affected by the anxiety and stress of the raging of great battles, the uncertainty of every day, the tragic bloodshed, the sight of wounded victims brought to the city, the loss of friends and friends' children. Austerlitz, Jena, Hanau, Friedland, must have been to Beethoven what El Alamein, Montecassino, Stalingrad were to the generation of World War Two; and what composer writing in 1945 could have failed to be affected by those, and by the resistance struggles and the liberation of Europe? To quote Richard Capell again:

> "In a wind-swept Europe, Liberty and Fraternity, the hero's life and the tyrant's doom were in the air, and all are in Beethoven."

War was never far away during those years, and in 1809 it roared right into Vienna. The French bombarded the city centre, and Beethoven, crouching in a cellar, pulled a pillow over his ears to protect his poor hearing from the bursting shells.

For months after this he could not produce "more than a fragment here and there", and wrote: "What a destructive and savage life is raging all around me! Nothing but drums, cannons, human misery of every kind!"

However he pulled himself together and "on the 2nd of the winter month, 1809" wrote to the publisher Brietkopf:

> "After this wild destruction, a little peace, after all this unthinkable discomfort . . . I have been working for some weeks at a stretch, rather, it seemed, for death than for immortality . . .'.

The result of this work included the string quartet in E flat, Op. 74, the *Goethe Songs,* and the Fifth Piano Concerto—to which the title *Emperor* has got stuck, though surely not by consent of its composer.

During the next two years he wrote comparatively little. A letter of 1811 tells us that

> "a year or two ago . . . I was dragged by force into worldly affairs, the result up to now has been negative rather than positive. But who could be immune from the effect of the storms outside?"

The war went on and on, with its load of suffering, public and private. Beethoven helped organise concerts for the wounded, wrote the sonata "Das Lebewohl" for an absent friend, complained about rising prices and the drastic devaluation which nearly halved his annuity. He found consolation in friendship with various charming women, particularly Therese Brunswick (who was later deeply involved in social work and famine relief, and whose goodness would have qualified her for his wife had it been possible), and Bettina Brentano, who introduced him to Goethe. The two great men enjoyed each other's company, though Beethoven found Goethe "too fond of the atmosphere of the court, more so than is becoming to a poet", while Goethe disapproved of the composer's "untamed personality", general disgruntlement, and refusal to bow to the Royal Family when out on a walk—the composer was too deeply committed to his democratic ideas to abandon them even for Goethe.

Growing Optimism

In 1812 there was a lifting of the clouds over Europe. Popular resistance to Napoleon's occupation was making things difficult for the French; Wellington was winning the Peninsular War with the help of the Spanish guerrillas, and groups of partisans (such as the Tugendbund) were active in Germany and Poland. Napoleon invaded Russia that autumn, and with the disaster of Moscow the tide truly turned. The partisans harassed the French army in retreat, and though Napoleon won the battles of Nützen and of Bautzen, these were his last successes.

In the atmosphere of growing optimism Beethoven completed the Seventh Symphony, which, notwithstanding the contemplative slow movement, and the Austrian pilgrim tune (a touch of patriotism?) of the trio, is a confident, even exultant, work. This was followed by the lighthearted Eighth, which conveys the impression of a load having been lifted from the mind. The Seventh was first performed at a concert in aid of wounded soldiers, in December 1813, along with the "Battle Symphony" celebrating Wellington's success at Vittoria.

The latter work was a rather second-rate *pièce d'occasion* but it had a huge success, and

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Beethoven wrote, thanking the famous artists (Hummel, Spohr, Salieri) who had taken part:

> "Every one of us was filled with pure feelings of patriotism and of joyful self-sacrifice to those who have sacrificed so much to us."

In 1814 Napoleon was defeated at Leipzig and fled to Elba. The top European rulers met at Vienna for the Peace Congress. It was the occasion for great celebrations in the city and Beethoven was invited to write a cantata for performance before the assembled potentates—the Tsar and Tsarina of Russia, the King of Prussia, Castlereagh, representing the British Prince Regent, and many more.

The cantata, "Der Glorreiche Augenblick", with its banal text ("Europa arise!—Vienna salutes Health and Happiness", etc.) and unvaried heartiness, is not a great work, but it expresses the general jubilation and the belief that with Napoleon's defeat peace and justice would prevail in war-weary Europe.

Beethoven was now at the height of his fame and universally honoured. He entered into the spirit of the moment, went to parties, and received a medal from the King of Prussia, which pleased him in spite of his contempt for monarchs. He believed like most people in a brave new world.

Reaction Returns

Unfortunately popular hopes were doomed to disappointment. The Austrian people soon found themselves living in a police state.

Under Metternich, the ruling class re-established the absolute monarchy of the Holy Roman Empire, and the liberal constitution, civil rights and social progress promised and so valiantly fought for, failed to materialise.

Freedom became a dirty word. Culture suffered. As Stendhal remarked, in his *Life of Haydn*: "At Vienna . . . politics being forbidden, pleasures of a sensuous kind, less troublesome to government, took possession." Operettas and "Singspiele" imported from Italy, "music suiting the frivolous and sensual taste of the times", ousted serious German music.

All this greatly depressed Beethoven, and the lack of freedom appalled him. He was bitterly opposed to the Government and all its ways, and eagerly followed news of rebellion in the outside world. He supported the students when many were arrested after the assassination of Kotzebue (a Tsarist agent) by a young German at Jena, and he took as his confidential secretary Anton Schindler who had been jailed for a time for associating with "subversives".

On his release, Schindler visited Beethoven and was received with open arms and made to tell the story of his ordeal in every detail.

> "I used to go and see him every day in a remote room in the Beer-house, 'Zum Rosenstock'," Schindler wrote. "It was a meeting-place of a number of Josephites of the first water, to whom our master presented no discordant note . . ."

The early influence had not worn off after thirty years. On the contrary, Beethoven's interest in politics increased. A visitor from England, Cyprian Potter, reported:[5]

> "the first day I was with him he rushed into politics and called the Austrian Government all sorts of names. He expressed keen interest in England, and said he wanted to see the House of Commons"

—perhaps he did not realise as Byron and Shelley did, that Castlereagh and Sidmouth were nearly as bad as Metternich.

The "conversation books" of the period 1818 to 21, in which his visitors jotted down the answers to his spoken questions (for by now he was completely deaf), indicate his constant preoccupation with current affairs. We read for instance the reply to a query on events in Hungary: "There is a peasant rising near Pressburg—very serious—today 2 battalions of Hessian garrison with 12 cannon . . . 8,000 peasants from Prince Palfi's estate. A battalion of the Alexander regiment is said to have taken over. It's all due to the prince's oppression."

Then a comment:

> "These great bankers have all the ministries of Europe in their hands and can overthrow the regimes whenever they want to . . . European politics are such that without bankers and their money nothing can be done. They have no ideas—those disappeared along with the conquest of Paris. The ruling class has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing . . ."

The visitor on one occasion evidently showed Beethoven a book: "This is interesting. I can't tell you where I got it—it's on the banned list. The police are collecting all those from the bookshops".

And to one of Beethoven's questions the answer was "Freedom!" followed by the warning,

> "Don't speak so loud—your position is too well known. It's a disadvantage of public places that one is so surrounded—everything hears and listens" (Alles horcht and hört").[6]

The Ninth

Between 1815 and 1821 the low level of musical life, the social and financial crisis, his illness and

[5] Hamburger (Journals and Reminiscences of Beethoven, Thames and Hudson), p. 160.

[6] Knepler, p. 578.

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total deafness, added to personal problems, and the wretched lawsuit over his nephew Karl, all combined to fill Beethoven with despair, and he wrote little music of importance, except four intensely personal piano sonatas. But in 1822 the economic crisis had eased, and the lawsuit was settled. Beethoven pulled himself together and set to work to complete the *Mass in D major*, which he had started on some years earlier.

When this mighty work was done he buckled down to the *D minor Symphony* which had been in his mind, and sketched out in parts, for many years—the Ninth.

This shows that his ideas had not lost their intensity of power, and it proclaims his confident belief in Freedom, Joy and the Brotherhood of Man. Although he lived nearly three years longer and produced the marvellous late quartets, the most poignant of personal statements, *the Ninth* was truly the summing up and declaration of his faith.

Bernard Shaw once wrote that the *Ninth Symphony* "is religious music . . . The music of my own church . . . is to be found in *Die Zauberflöte* and the *Ninth Symphony*." Whether or not one belongs to Shaw's church, it is clear what he means.

In the symphony are garnered up the experiences of thirty-five years of revolution, war, peace and social conflict. Battles rage, distant guns rumble, trumpets sound, blessed moments of peace are enjoyed, the liberated people exult. One doesn't have to translate the 40 bars of timps, or the 52 bars of trumpets literally—but it is all there.

Grillparzer, his friend, put it in the oration read at Beethoven's funeral on 29 March, 1827,

> "as Behemoth rushes, tempestuous, over the oceans, so he flew over the frontiers of his art. From the cooing of doves to the rolling of the thunder, all he exhausted, all he took in his stride".

For "doves", read peace, and human happiness; for "thunder" read social upheaval—add a deep sense of responsibility, and an unrivalled mastery of ideas and technique, and one has still not touched on the greatest achievement of Beethoven—which was to catch the spirit of his age, and embody its powerful liberating passion, in some of the most glorious music of all time.

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50th Anniversary of the C.P.G.B.

The Communist Party in the Industrial Struggle

Peter Kerrigan

Because of the character of the British working class from its very early days, it was inevitable that from the inception of the Communist Party it should be in the forefront of every industrial struggle in Britain during the first half century of its existence.

Consequently this article will not attempt the impossible, that is, to give a blow by blow account of its activities on the industrial battlefront or even to try and give an outline history of our work in this sphere.

Instead it will endeavour to examine and draw attention to specific features of our work including weaknesses which reflected on our progress.

In this way I hope it will contribute to the overall picture of our Party during five decades in which,

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inspired by the tremendous example of the glorious October Revolution, the forces of progress led by the Communist Parties have transformed the world in which we live, and laid the foundation for the final victory of Socialism.

Early Struggles

In the very first chapter of James Klugmann's *History of the Communist Party*, mentioned among the political and industrial organisations which came together to form the Communist Party appear the names of industrial workers like Harry Pollitt, Willie Gallacher, Bob Stewart, Bill Hewlett, Tom Bell, Wal Hannington and many others who were to play leading parts in the forthcoming class battles. Yet it is a fact that, apart from Scotland, South Wales, London and parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire, our roots in the factories, pits and industry generally were weak.

It is worth noting here, however, that in the midst of the Party's birth pangs, just a couple of months before the Unity Convention in July-August 1920, the London dockers on May 10th stopped the *Jolly George* being loaded with munitions for Poland against the Soviet Union.

Harry Pollitt had played an important part here. Four days after the Party's Unity Convention, the first circular issued called for action on the Unions' refusal to make or handle munitions and a general strike. Mass actions and demonstrations throughout Britain forced the Government to abandon its policy of military intervention against the young Soviet Union.

In the period of growing economic depression and rising unemployment from 1920 onwards the employers launched a series of attacks on the workers. Following the betrayal by Thomas and collapse of the triple alliance of Miners, Railwaymen and Transport workers the miners, in June, 1921, after a three months strike were defeated. The next year, on March 11th, 1922, the AEU were locked out. On May 2nd this was extended to all engineering unions. On June 2nd the other unions returned to work and on June 10th the AEU ballotted 75,478 to 35,453 to go back. On June 13th like the miners, their members were starved into returning, and the notorious "procedure for avoiding disputes", better known as the York Memorandum, was imposed on them by the victorious employers.

During these disputes members of the Communist Party not only played an active part in the struggle but the Party had given a lead before the struggle. On March 5th, 1921, our Party warned not to rely on the union leaders. "In every pit, in every district throughout the country they should begin now to organise for the struggle that is coming." In the engineering struggle the Communist Party had put forward the slogan "stop the retreat" and everywhere we had appealed for solidarity of the whole Labour movement. Not only that, but the National Unemployed Workers, under Communist leadership, came with us on the picket line and, as I well remember in Glasgow as a member of the Central Lock-out Committee, marched with us in every demonstration. However, our Party was still too weak numerically to decisively influence the various sections coming successively under attack. Also in continually calling for social change in each of our appeals we tended to make workers feel that it wasn't possible to make real gains through the immediate struggle.

The Dockers' strike of 1923 against 1/- per day wage cut marked a new stage in the fight. The strike started in Cardiff, Bristol and Hull and spread to London, Manchester, Birkenhead, etc., but was most prolonged in London where Communists played a big part. They not only stiffened the resistence but also opposed efforts to form a breakaway union.

The Minority Movement

The biggest advance in our work on the industrial front came with the formation of the National Minority Movement in 1924. Previously the British Bureau of the Red International of Labour Unions had gained a lot of support among militant trade unionists. Led by the Communist Party, it had come out actively in the unions and trades councils to counter the betrayals of right wing leaders and their policy of retreat before the employers' attacks. There was, as I have already mentioned, this sectarian weakness in the work although it must be said that they *did* come out against the forming of breakaway "revolutionary" unions. The objective was set out very clearly by Harry Pollitt:

> "It was necessary to make a decisive turn to mass work in the factories, trade unions and working class organisations, and to try to end the old sectarian traditions of the British revolutionary movement once and for all. There emerged from this general policy the idea of trying to organise the Left Minority inside the trade unions and Labour Party in order to fight for the demands of the masses and at the same time to attempt to change the whole reformist policy and leadership of the official Labour Movement".

Minority movements had developed, or did later develop, in various industries. It became strongest among the Miners, Transport Workers, Engineers, Builders and Vehicle Builders, who worked out programmes for their separate industries.

The Conference which established a national centre was held in London on August 23-24. The 270 delegates represented over 200,000 workers.

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Peter Kerrigan (left foreground) greeting the late Alex Moffatt outside London as the two sections of the 1936 Scottish Hunger March (one of which marched through the Western and the other through the Eastern part of Britain) join forces.

Its programme put to the TUC called for a struggle for £1 per week increase, a minimum wage of £4 per week, a 44-hour week, the formation of workshop committees, reorganisation and strengthening of trades councils, affiliation of the National Unemployed Workers Committee movement and trades councils to the TUC and their representation on the General Council, workers' control of industry, pressure to force the Labour Government to change its policy, etc. It also called for a campaign against the war danger and for action to achieve international unity of the Trade Union Movement. Of the other resolutions adopted the most important was the one moved by J. R. Campbell calling for factory committees to unite the workers for industrial struggles.

In the final resolution, moved by Harry Pollitt, seconded by Arthur Horner, it was made clear that the Minority Movement was not set up in opposition to the existing trade unions. It would work within the unions against "the present tendency towards social peace and class collaboration." One of the earliest successes of the Minority Movement in 1924 was the election of A. J. Cook, a leading member of the Miners' Minority Movement, to the post of General Secretary of the Miners' Federation.

There was a slight improvement in Britain's economic position in 1923 and 1924 with a drop in the unemployment figures and a pick up in employment in mining (where it rose from 1,173,280 In 1922 to 1,246,135 in 1924) and in engineering. In that year the miners managed to get the 1921 agreement revised and in the winter railwaymen, engineers, shipbuilders, Post Office workers and dockers all submitted wage claims.

There was also a successful TUC delegation visit to the Soviet Union and the Labour Government granted diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union. At the National Minority Movement Conference in August the delegates present numbered 443, and in March 1926, on the eve of the General Strike, 547 organisations (including five National Executives) represented 957,000 members. There were many issues on which the Minority Movement was active. On international trade union unity they held a very successful conference in January 1926 and following this the General Council of the TUC set up the Anglo-Soviet Joint Advisory Council.

Preparing for the General Strike

But the main issue overshadowing all else was the approaching General Strike. By the spring of 1925 the slump in coal exports and the disastrous government decision to return to the Gold Standard created a crisis in the industry which the owners proposed to solve by terminating the agreement and abolishing completely any national element in the standard wage. In other words, drastic wage cuts which they said might be modified if the miners agreed to the return of the 8-hour day.

In February 1925 the Minority Movement sent an open letter to the General Council of the TUC which said:

> "We realise that the workers are facing a similar situation to that which they faced in 1921, and unless speedy action is taken by the General Council to put an end to this sectionalism nothing but a similar defeat and disaster to that experienced after Black Friday faces the Movement again. We therefore call on the General Council to immediately convene a meeting of all unions in the industries that have made wage demands in 1924 in order to form a Committee of Action".

The General Council refused to go beyond the 1924 TUC decision taken under Minority Movement influence when, by 3,608,000 votes to 259,000 a resolution was carried empowering the General Council "to take steps on behalf of the unions . . . all such moral and material support as circumstances of the dispute may appear to justify."

On June 30th, 1925, the mineowners gave notice to terminate the agreement on July 31st, at midnight. On July 1st their fresh proposals for an agreement meant an immediate reduction in wages and the end of the guaranteed minimum wage. On July 10th the Miners' Executive met the General Council of the TUC, who agreed to complete support for the miners. After further support from the T & GWU and ASLE & F and at a special TUC on July 24th to which the miners appealed, the TUC agreed to put an embargo on all movements of coal if the miners were locked out. On July 30th the special Conference of Trade Union Executives met and

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ratified the embargo. It also empowered the TUC to give financial support and issue strike orders.

As is known, the government capitulated by giving a nine-months subsidy in return for which the owners withdrew their notices and a Royal Commission was set up.

James Klugmann, in the second volume of his *History of the Communist Party*, quotes Party statements, *Workers Weekly* editorials, R. Palme Dutt's editorial in *Labour Monthly*, the warnings and appeals to the workers to prepare for the coming show-down.

The government made its preparations. The black-leg "Organisation for Maintaining Supplies" was set up, and the government set out to behead the revolutionary movement by arresting the twelve Communist leaders. The government attack was preceded by the 1925 Labour Party Conference which followed its previous decisions to refuse Communist Party affiliation, by banning Communists from individual membership of the Labour Party and urging unions to refrain from nominating or electing Communists to local or national Labour Party Conferences. J. H. Thomas in the *Weekly Dispatch* article said: "Smash the Reds or they will smash us." At the Conservative Conference in early October, Baldwin told the delegates proceedings against the Communists were under consideration. A fortnight later twelve Communists were arrested. Tom Bell, editor of *Communist Review*, J. R. Campbell, E. Cant, (Secretary of the London District of the Party,) William Gallacher, Albert Inkpin (Secretary of the Party), Harry Pollitt (Secretary of the National Minority Movement), Bill Rust (Secretary of the Young Communist League), Tom Wintringham (Assistant Editor of the *Workers' Weekly*), Wally Hannington, leader of the unemployed, Arthur McManus, J. T. Murphy and Robin Page Arnot. As is known it ended with five of them—Gallacher, Inkpin, Hannington, Pollitt and Rust getting 12 months and the other seven 6 months imprisonment.

Despite the campaign of the Party and the Minority Movement as well as the miners, the leaders of the trade unions continued to be passive in face of government preparations.

The Minority Movement campaign for Councils of Action did, however, result in a considerable response. The trades councils responded and Councils of Action were set up in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Barrow, Liverpool, Doncaster, Sheffield and Birmingham among other places. Fifty-two trades councils including London sent delegates to the March 1926 National Conference of Action. That these did a very effective job on the whole I can vouch for, as Chairman of the Official Central Strike Committee in Glasgow. The representatives of hospitals and other similar bodies had to come to us for permits for moving food, etc. Despite the passivity of some of the local trade union officials on the Committee, apart from a few black-leg students and of the OMS heavily guarded by police, who drove some trams and a few lorries to the docks, nothing moved, and even these couldn't travel a mile from the city centre without being stopped and usually overturned. There also can be no doubt about, first, the incredulity, and then the burning anger, with which the sudden news of the betrayal was received. The attitude of the ruling class towards the Party, and its understanding of the influence of our Party was shown not only in the arrest and imprisonment of the twelve leaders but during the strike the mass arrests of Party members. Out of approximately 5,000 members at the beginning of the strike a total of over 1,200 were arrested throughout Britain during the strike period.

However, the General Strike has been dealt with in many books, including the official histories of the miners, by Gallacher and Pollitt and in particular by James Klugmann in his second volume of the history of our Party.

The Class Against Class Period

Following the General Strike in the sharp and correct criticism of the trade union leaders there began to emerge the elements of sectarianism which over the following period led to considerable isolation of our Party. There had been a wide reaction against the "lefts" in the General Council, who either supported Thomas openly or kept silent during the betrayal. Some Party members saw them as mainly responsible for the defeat. This line also appeared in the *Thesis on the General Strike* adopted by the Communist International in June 1926 which included this point in Our Immediate Tasks: "Exposure of the Left Wing as people who capitulated in spite of their majority and who carried on a Right policy, being thereby mainly responsible for the defeat."

At its Conference in August 1926 the Minority Movement discussed and took decisions on the campaign of support for the locked out miners and put forward its proposals on "The Future of the Trade Union Movement." Included was the objective of changing the leadership. On organisation, however, it proposed to change from a broad militant movement campaigning for a progressive policy to a tight, co-ordinated organisation fighting for control of trade union machinery. The objective was "an alternative leader against every union official who has failed the workers in their struggle," and "it is absolutely essential that the new leadership produced by the Minority Movement comes to the control of the existing unions to transform them into real class war organisations." There

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is no doubt that the sense of betrayal felt following the General Strike contributed to the sectarian reaction of many militants and CP members in industry and the unions. An important additional influence came from the RILU.

The RILU Congress in March 1928 formulated the policy of Unity from Below and Class against Class which very much shaped the attacks on the reformist TU leadership. It also set forth the proposal that the aim should be to mobilise all workers whether they were in trade unions or not. Losovsky, Secretary of the RILU, writing on the carrying out of these decisions, argued that "the masses must be organised and led, if necessary, without the trade union apparatus and against it; no fetish must be made of the trade unions; the reformist organisations must not be transformed into objects of worship; while it must always be kept in mind that reformist organisations are tools in the hands of the bourgeois state and the employers' organisations to crush the revolutionary wing of the Labour Movement and to enslave the broad proletarian masses."

At the 12th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) in the Thesis, Social Democracy was described as Social Fascism and this statement appeared: "Only by directing the main blows against Social Democracy —this social mainstay of the bourgeoisie—will it be possible to strike at and defeat the chief class enemy of the proletariat—the bourgeoisie. And only by strict differentiation between the social democratic leaders will Communists be able, by means of the united front from below, to break down the wall which often separates them from the social democratic workers."

There can be no doubt that the description of social democracy as Social Fascism and the call for the main blow to be delivered against it contributed to the sectarianism which isolated our Party in Britain. At the same time it is important to stress that our Party and Minority Movement did not, as has been said, set out to split the unions and set up "Revolutionary" or "Red" unions. Both in the case of the United Mineworkers of Scotland and the United Clothing Workers the facts disprove it. In particular what happened in respect to the UMS is set forth in the clearest manner by Abe Moffat in his book *My Life with the Miners*.

Overcoming Sectarianism

The continuing and growing mass struggles and increasingly active participation by members of our Party, particularly the greater attention to the trade unions under the leadership of Comrade Pollitt, helped to overcome some of this sectarianism.

The 13th National Congress of our Party in February 1935 noted some of these things: the rising strike movement for wage increases and improved conditions; the tremendous revolt against Part 2 of the Unemployment Act; the growth of the united fight against Mosley Fascists. The resolution stated: "The fight for the united front and the successful advance of the united front struggle is the path to the revolutionary advance of the working class in the present period." The Party also decided to step up the campaign against the Black Circular. In his speech to Congress Harry Pollitt said: "It is very significant that Comrade Abe Moffat, the General Secretary of the United Mineworkers of Scotland, could recently report: 'the Unity Campaign of the UMS gained more success than any other question in the last five years', and this fact is not unconnected with the success of United Action with members of the reformist unions."

At the 7th World Congress of the Communist International held in Moscow in July and August 1935, Comrade Campbell intervened on Comrade Pieck's Report to make some criticism of the line over the past seven years. Among other things he said: "Now sectarianism in our trade union work based itself fundamentally—or theoretically—on two things. On the Strasbourg resolution on strike strategy, and on a distortion of the theory of Social Fascism as applied to the trade unions. . . . Nevertheless, there were certain formulations in the Strasbourg resolution which did give rise to sectarian distortions of the policy of independent leadership of economic struggles. . . . Can the Executive Committee say that in a timely

Leaders of the British Battalion of the International Brigade on Hill 481 after the crossing of the Ebro in July 1938.

Front Row: Bob Cooney, Battalion Commissar, Alan Gilchrist, Company Commander. Captains Paddy O'Dare and George Fletcher.

Back Row: Peter Kerrigan (then ***Daily Worker*** **Correspondent), Sam Wild, Battalion Commander, Ted Edwards, Battalion Secretary.**

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fashion it took the initiative in correcting those tendencies? Our experience in Britain was that two years after the Strasbourg resolution was passed, it was being impressed on us in Britain that it was fundamentally correct in all particulars and in all its formulations. . . . But when the circumstances changed, did the Executive ensure that the change was carried out in all parties with the necessary vigour? Did the parties, when the change was carried out, react sufficiently to that change and carry it out in a vigorous fashion?"

"In our opinion it was unfortunate that the International declaration on the united front of March followed a declaration of the Labour and Socialist International of a similar character."

In reply Comrade Pieck argued that the 10th and 11th Plenums of the ECCI had condemned sectarian mistakes. He quoted the following from the 12th Plenum resolution: "One of the major reasons of insufficient mobilisation of the masses by the Communist Parties and the revolutionary trade union organisations for the struggle against the capitalist offensive is the intolerably weak work in the reformist unions." He went on: "Nevertheless it is possible that the Executive Committee has in fact in some cases not interfered immediately with sufficient energy against sectarian tendencies which became apparent in Party and especially in trade union work. The Executive Committee was somewhat belated in correcting the Strasbourg Conference decisions inasmuch as it did not immediately alter the formulations which proved faulty and caused great distortions in the work of the sections, and were no longer suited to the altered situation."

In his speech to the 7th World Congress on "The Working Class Against Fascism" and in his reply to the discussion, Comrade Georgi Dimitrov never once used the term "Social Fascism". On the contrary, in great detail and with a wealth of examples he outlined the policy of the united front embracing all elements in the social democratic parties who would fight or who could be appealed to in order to get them taking united action in the struggle against Fascism.

In dealing with the two different camps of Social-Democracy, he said: "As I have already pointed out there is a reactionary camp of social democracy, but alongside of it there exists and is growing the camp of Left Social Democrats (without quotation marks) of workers who are becoming revolutionary. The decisive difference between them in practice consists in their attitude to the united front of the working class."

In his speech to Congress on Comrade Dimitrov's Report, Harry Pollitt said: "This Congress, which may be the last before a new world war breaks out or new revolutionary battles develop, is making the united front one of its central questions." He went on, "We must take into account in the formulation of our tactics, slogans and organisational forms, the actual concrete situation that obtains—not only in the country as a whole, but in every factory, industry, trade union and working class locality", and he gave practical examples of how to do it. He spent time on the problem of winning the youth and the women, and examined in detail the fight against fascism in Britain. In answering the question of why, with the great mass demonstrations against the National Government, the reformist leaders were able to prevent strike action to bring down the government, he said "The main reason was the tendency to rely on the spontaneous mass feeling and indignation of the masses, the enthusiasm and mass demonstrations, etc.—without at the same time winning the trade union branches and the employed workers to carry out the slogan of strike action as the next stage in the fight."

The Unemployed Workers Movement

In my view it is necessary to say something on the role of the Unemployed Organisation during this period.

I've already mentioned its activities in the period of the early twenties. After the General Strike and defeat of the unions the lengthening of the working day added over 100,000 miners to the unemployed and by July 1927 there were over 250,000 miners registered as unemployed. The second Labour Government came into office in 1929. Within a year the number of unemployed had risen by 640,000 to 1,990,000 and by December it had reached 2,643,000. When the 12th Congress of the Communist Party was held in November 1932 there were three million unemployed in Britain. In the year war broke out the number of unemployed in May 1939 was still 1,471,540 plus thousands of unregistered. The problem did not disappear until after the war had started.

From the very first days of mass unemployment after World War 1 the Communists had worked among and organised the unemployed. Wal Hannington, a Communist, was the outstanding leader and organiser who, from the beginning, orientated the movement towards the unions and the TUC. At one time he managed to get a joint committee of the unemployed and the TUC set up. During all the list of Hunger Marches, local and national, the marchers appealed for and got support from local trade union branches, trades councils and factory workers.

It was the proud and undisputed claim of the NUWM that it was "black-leg proof." Not only did the unemployed workers refuse to cross a picket line, but invariably in local and national

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strikes they helped man the picket lines although union rules in those days in many cases meant they lapsed automatically from union membership on losing their jobs.

Another factor that flowed from this was the fact that the Mosley Fascists made very little inroad among the unemployed. This meant he was unable to build up the mass type of following that had been a feature in Italy and particularly in Germany. In the demonstrations against Mosley the unemployed played their part. From my own experience I know that in October 1936 at the end of the last national Hunger March on London, numbers of young unemployed marchers immediately volunteered and left to join the British Battalion of the International Brigade in Spain without returning home.

I consider these are important and noteworthy features of the British working class movement during at least two decades of the past 50 years.

The Post-war Period

More recently and particularly following the war of 1939-45, events are much fresher in our memories. A highly significant thing for the International Trade Union movement was the formation during the war of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee. From that came the establishment of the World Federation of Trade Unions at the Congress in London which also saw the American Congress of Industrial Organisations as one of the founders.

Unfortunately the WFTU suffered a split arising from the Cold War when in 1949 the British, US and some other unions walked out. It is interesting to note that Arthur Deakin, Secretary of the T & GWU who led the walk out, in the same year got a ban applied to Communists holding office in the T & GWU, and immediately afterwards got the union to endorse the wage freeze policy advocated by Sir Stafford Cripps.

Communists and militants in the unions defeated the wage freeze at the Trades Union Congress, and then in turn opposed efforts first by the Tories and then by the last Labour Government to impose further wage freezes. Or rather, to be more accurate, in the case of the last Labour Government, defeated the Labour Government's attempt to impose the policy set out in the White Paper *In Place of Strife* on the unions—this policy which by means of legal sanctions including imprisonment for striking would have crippled the unions' ability to defend their members' interests.

There is no doubt that the mass lobbies of the TUC and the May Day strike of May 1st, 1969, were decisive in pushing the TUC into open opposition and forced a withdrawal by the Labour Government.

In the course of these recent struggles big changes have occurred in the British trade union movement. Alongside the traditional militancy of industrial workers like the miners, engineers, shipbuilders and dockers etc., we have seen public employees including teachers taking strike action to improve their wages and conditions; what is more, winning important advances, which in the case of the teachers directly influenced them to affiliate to the TUC.

In the unions the T & GWU, the biggest in Britain, at its last rules Conference lifted the ban on Communists holding office. In that union, as in the second biggest, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, new progressive leaders have been elected in the shape of Jack Jones, General Secretary of the T & GWU and Hugh Scanlon, President of the AUEW. This has been accompanied by advances in the composition of their Executive Committees and in a number of other unions, as well as in the General Council of the TUC. The trade unions have not only been pressing for and winning important advances in wages and conditions, but also over the period have played an increasingly progressive part in the struggle for peace, against the US wars in Indo-China, against racialism, for a European Security Conference and other important issues.

The Trades Councils during these 50 years

Although I have mentioned the role of the Trades Councils during the period leading up to and during the General Strike, more needs to be said about them. They are very vital links bringing together the local trade union branches (and in the early period local labour and Co-op organisations), co-ordinating and giving direction to their activities. This historic role stands out when you consider the part played by the Glasgow Trades Council and especially the Manchester Trades Council in calling the conference which gave birth to the British Trades Union Congress. In view of the attack on trade unions which the present Tory Government has launched it is worth quoting from an article written by Harry Pollitt in 1927 when he said:

> "*All Power* (organ of the British Bureau of the MM) raised the questions of the Trades Councils becoming the local unifying centres of class struggle, and that they should be composed of delegates from the workshops, political organisations, trade unions and co-operatives, also that they should have representation at the Trades Union Congress and on its General Council. (In Scotland they have this representation. PK) . . . *All Power* also brought to the fore the important role of the factory committees in the trade union and working class movement . . . It is interesting to recall in this connection

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> that, whilst these ideas were first being popularised in 1922, in 1927, when we have had to discuss the best ways and means of fighting the Trade Union Bill, the Executive Committee of the Minority Movement has had to place ever increasing importance on the establishment of factory committees as the most effective way of smashing down any of the legal barriers the Government hopes to erect against trade unionists demonstrating their solidarity in times of strikes and general strikes".

He went on:

> "The result of these ideas began to manifest itself in many directions. One of the first was in October 1922 when the Birmingham Trades Council convened a national conference of Trades Councils. . . . It is important to note that after that conference we had the opportunity of developing a very powerful national federation of Trades Councils, but the active workers connected with our movement felt that it was preferable, in view of the relationship which factory committees, trades councils and General Council must inevitably occupy, for the General Council to be the medium through which national conferences of Trades Councils should be organised".

This in fact is the position today, and I have quoted Harry at length because he understood so clearly the vital importance of Trades Councils as the unifying and co-ordinating bodies of the local Trades Union and Labour Movement.

The right wing also understood and feared this. That is why they decided to refuse recognition to any Trades Council affiliated to the Minority Movement. When the Black Circular was in operation they dissolved trades councils which refused to discriminate against Communists. This policy probably reached its peak at the height of the Cold War when they deliberately intervened in London to disrupt the London Trades Council, and set up the "London Trades Council 1952" barring Communists and many left wing delegates and affiliated unions from membership.

Throughout Britain today in the great industrial centres of London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Newcastle, Leeds, Cardiff and Belfast, etc. the Trades Councils are a powerful local force unifying, organising and in a number of cases leading the local movement on major issues as widely varied as equal pay, housing, racialism, Vietnam and cheap travel for the old people. It's not only in the great centres but in scores of less important places, including small market towns, that they are the focal point of the local movement.

Let us use their experience, their prestige and ability in the new and dangerous threat with which this Tory administration is challenging the Trade Union movement of this country.

The Daily Worker and Morning Star

From January 1930 the working class and progressive movement in Britain has had on its side a national daily newspaper, the *Daily Worker*, which was launched under great difficulties but consistently fought to carry out its work on the lines first laid down by Lenin to Tom Bell in his famous letter urging the production of a daily paper in 1921. It was nine years before the paper was produced, and it has been of inestimable value ever since. Apart from the period in the first stages of the Second World War it has never failed to appear. In April 1966 it came out with its new name, the *Morning Star*. It has continued despite tremendous financial and other difficulties (including discrimination by the government in withholding government advertising) to appear, advocating Socialist policies and reporting on all the major issues facing the workers. During the past few years the official organ of the Labour Party and the trade unions, the *Daily Herald*, was first sold to a capitalist concern, then later had its name changed to *The Sun* and passed into the hands of another capitalist from Australia.

I mention these known facts to place on record in this article the vital role of this paper, not only for the Communist Party and the "left", but also for the whole British working class movement in face of the new issues which confront us.

The Communist Attitude to the Trade Unions

Because I have devoted some space to mistakes in our work I want to make it clear that the Communist Party does not believe trade unions can be treated like political party organisations or that Communists should try to make them function as such. Britain gave birth to the trade unions, and they came into existence to defend and advance the economic interests of the workers.

Naturally from their very beginning right up to date the unions have been involved in politics. It was to strengthen their political position that the unions set up the Labour Representation Committee, later formed the Labour Party and have been its principal support ever since.

Communists actively encourage the trade unions to take up political issues that affect trade union members and the working class generally. Edward Heath's proposed legislation will have to be fought by both economic and political actions. British Government support for the United States wars in Indo-China is a political issue affecting the entire membership of the British trade union movement as well as their families. Consequently it is of great importance when the TUC comes out in opposition to government policy on this question, and uses its votes at the Labour Party Conference to achieve a similar decision.

(completed on page 368)

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Discussion Contributions on:

Socialist Democracy

Maurice Levitas

Can the problems associated with democracy be separated from those concerning power? If they cannot be so separated then the tendency to isolate the quest for democracy from the struggle of the working class to win and to maintain power must be at fault. For example, the struggle waged by the working class for what are called democratic rights in Britain during the last hundred years and more was a struggle: (i) to limit the power of the capitalist class; (ii) to win political advantages for the working class; (iii) to secure effective trade union organisation; (iv) to create and widen social facilities available to working people and their children. These 'democratic' achievements were the outcome of power processes like strikes, organised campaigns, demonstrations, elections, self-education and so on and the power processes could only be effective to the extent that institutions like trades unions, trades councils, co-operatives and workers' political parties were built and protected. From the point of view of socialists these gains in the class struggle were milestones on the way to the conquest of political power—but it was the movement that achieved them, only the movement, that could ultimately win and wield power itself. Only working class political power, won and securely held could be the harbinger of a society more democratic than any before, a classless society in which political power had no function and therefore one in which the state withered away.

The history of our class internationally manifests a similar pattern of struggle with the difference that in some other countries the crucial battle for power was waged and lost; in Russia in 1917 it was won. Around these defeats and this victory—and others since—a considerable literature has grown to indicate (i) what may be seen to be peculiar to a victory—or a defeat—in its particular time and place, and (ii) what may be seen to be generally essential to the victory of the working class.

One general indication is that when the struggle is for democratic rights the continued existence of capitalism is for the moment not in question. On the other hand, when the history of struggle has made state power the issue, slogans of democracy, elections, referenda and so on have been raised to blur the vision and to weaken the resolve of the working class and its allies. The essential strategy of reaction at such moments is to deny that working class institutions *ought* to be organs of power: the appeal is for trust in 'neutral' processes and institutions. These generalisations are logical enough but they are also reasonable inferences from events which have occurred.

During the 'Thirties

During the thirties capitalism's deep economic crisis with its attendant fear of workers' revolution made certain capitalist states dismantle their 'democratic' institutions. (It is suggested by some that this could have been prevented by the communists had they acted differently but there is no single experience either before or since 1933 to prove that this view is well-founded.) In every capitalist country there were created organisations which could act in a similar way. At the same time the leading capitalist powers believed that it was both necessary and possible to destroy the fact of working class power in one country.

In those conditions the twin strategies of popular front versus fascism and alliance between the Soviet Union and 'democratic' capitalist 'states versus the Axis powers contained the possibilities: (i) that fascism would be halted in its advance; (ii) that in France and Spain new democratic rights would place the working class in a better political position; (iii) that the Soviet Union would not have to face—once again—a united capitalist military front but this time without the disequilibrium that followed the Great War and with no current struggles for working class power.

These strategies failed and were seen to be failing even before Munich with the consequence that the Soviet Union had to rely for survival on diplomatic manoeuvre and military preparedness. Any account of the factors that led to power being concentrated at the centre of the Soviet state especially during the middle and late thirties must take into account—besides its social and political inheritance—the fact of the failure of the working class of Europe. This failure was most certainly not due to an underestimation of the importance of the struggle for democracy or democratic rights. The strongest parties of the working class as well

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as the trade union leaderships insisted upon the validity of 'democratic' procedures. The Communist parties were not the main parties of the working class in Europe; their influence in the trade unions was relatively small. The basic reason for this tragic failure was that working class organisation was not brought to use the force at its command extra-constitutionally, undemocratically in the parliamentary sense, politically.

Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Such a perspective may indicate the need for a wee bit more balance on the part of some discussants of Socialist democracy. It is no great wonder that under such pressures unforgiveable sins came to be committed in the Soviet Union. But *survival* was a redeeming virtue for which Joseph Stalin deserves some credit. This survival was essential to our maintaining democratic rights in Britain, to the resurgence of working class organisation on the continent, to the development of struggles for independence from imperialism. China, Cuba, Vietnam, the developing international revolutionary movement, all owe something to the (not inevitably) successful outcome of the power struggle waged in Eastern Europe from 1941 to 1945. That this was a struggle for democracy is of course true but only in the sense that an extension of working class power *is* an extension of democracy.

The actuality of history proves over and over again what the followers of Marx have argued from the concrete experience of revolutionary class struggle: that a dictatorship of the proletariat would have to be the mode of political organisation following the conquest of political power. The fact that dictatorship would be of the many over the few made it more democratic in their eyes; the perspective that it would manifest the policies and will of the democratic structure of working class institutions held the promise of a withering away of the state to the extent that non-socialist institutions became obsolete.

Russian socio-political backwardness meant that the working class was small and that there was no deep-rooted extensive apparatus—with all its traditions—of working class organisation such as we possess in Britain. In the international circumstances described above, instead of the development of the *soviets* as units of power, a centralised state apparatus *could and did* become a power monopoly and a negation of socialist democracy. The necessary and direct support for this structure and its dealings with the internal problems of the beleagured 'socialist sixth' was the theory of sharpening class struggle under socialism.

However a theory that expresses disappointment with what has happened in Russia in a promise to use only parliamentary methods, only elections, as a means of attaining socialism in Britain, if it becomes the guide to working class political action, will only guarantee the perpetuation of capitalism in this country. The notion that in some way the ready-made state apparatus can become an instrument of working class power embodies two errors: (i) that the state is neutral in the class struggle; (ii) that the pretended neutrality will somehow turn into a fact given certain conditions (election results plus working class struggle). The proofs that this notion leaves the working class defenceless when the class enemy feels its supremacy to be threatened are frequent enough in recent as well as in past history.

Acceptance of the theory of the neutrality of the state is exactly what keeps the working class in bondage to capitalism despite its efforts towards socialism through the election of Labour majorities to Parliament. This assumption is an important part of what makes a Labour government a government on behalf of capitalism—something which could not happen if trade unions, trade councils, works committees were seen as instruments of state power.

Neutrality of the State

Finally the theory of the neutrality of the state, implicit in the idea that it can be 'taken over' (by an extension of democracy) can lead logically to a kind of situation deplored in the case of Russia. If the institutions of working class struggle are not to become institutions of working class power, a centralised state apparatus standing above these institutions obtains a monopoly of power which can be used against them. Thus the conditions mature requiring a British theory of increasing class struggle under socialism.

Paradoxically enough, the tendency for Marxists to suggest that the state can be neutral (can be taken over) has gained force with the growth in power of states—socialist states—where this has not happened. The formula is that in world conditions including a powerful socialist sector, a 'peaceful' road using parliamentary institutions is possible. This is logical argument. But Greece, Vietnam, Indonesia show that logic is not enough. The facts indicate that imperialism is still powerful enough to confute this logic. We should learn from this (i) that the socialist world is not yet strong enough to underwrite constitutional challenges to capitalism as a social system; (ii) that the working class must make its own machinery of power. Only thus can it prepare betimes for what we do not now know: the conditions in which it will claim political power.

If communists continue as they have done in

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the past, to expose illusions for what they are, to seek a road to socialism through the development of class struggle by means of building and strengthening the organisations of struggle, to analyse in class terms current experience, to prepare in this way the working class for the realities which may be anticipated, then the nature and functions of democratic processes in circumstances attending the struggle for power will be manifest. And in the same way will grow the fact of an entire class—rather than a revolutionary élite—exercising power. This, it seems to me is fundamental to socialist democracy.

Harry Bradfield

After reading James Klugmann's paper on Socialist Democracy in the May issue, I began to ask myself the question—Why?

What is the purpose of this report? Upon reading it a few times one begins to realise that Klugmann himself partly provides the answer at the start of Part 4, when he says "May I in conclusion say a few (and it is a few) words on our perspective for democracy in a Socialist Britain—on this I can be brief, as over the past 20 years, we have set out in successive Editions of the *British Road*, the broad outline of our aims".

If he can be brief about Britain, then there would be no basis for this report at all. There must be a reason, and upon reading and studying the contents it becomes apparent that this report is not for educational purposes. In the introduction, which really lasts for 3½ pages, he prepares for a theoretical attack on the Soviet Union by using quotations from Lenin, in essence, he is really making the hypothetical point that Lenin would have frowned upon the present day policies of the Soviet Union. But let me warn against the use of quotations. On page 2 of Nationalism and Internationalism by James Klugmann, there is this paragraph. "A word on the use of quotes. There is a great danger in pulling out of context individual quotations of Marx, Engels and Lenin. These can be used to prove any standpoint and debases Marxism".

In the third section, which is the most important, there are 5 pages of this theoretical attack on the Soviet Union.

Before this discussion really gets under way I think it important to be honest, the real reason for these discussions which are taking place in the party branches is to get a deeper conviction in the mind of the party members on how right our leadership was over their opportunist line on the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. In short, brainwashing.

Obviously, I have not the time to go through the article in detail. I can only give comment on some of the points raised. Maybe the other points will come out in discussion.

Party Leadership

Klugmann does give the achievements of the Soviet Union, in 40 lines, but he spends almost five pages trying to prove how wrong they are. He raises the question of "How can the Communist Party exert its leadership?" He goes on to say "By putting forward a correct theory, a correct line, by winning people to that line, Communists exert their leadership by the wisdom of their theory." Surely, this depends on the level of social consciousness which the people in the various socialist countries have reached, by taking into consideration the historical background of each country. We know from our own example how a mass of people does not know what Socialism is, even when a Socialist Government takes over, it is still faced with this problem.

How long does it take the people in the newly emerged Socialist countries to throw off the mental fetters of capitalism, and start to recognise socialist objectives and policies, which initially go against the kind of liberalism which is inherent in the peoples' minds in capitalist countries. This is a question I asked a friend who has had a wide experience of working inside the Socialist countries for long periods. He said, "The people in the Soviet Union have reached a level of social consciousness in excess of the people in the other Socialist countries, who on the whole still think of themselves." Surely this is only to be expected. The Soviet Union has had 50 years experience, they have won the vast majority of the Russian people by the correctness of their social policies. Klugmann says that the objective is to inspire the working people. The greatest inspiration the Russian people showed to the whole world happened between the years 1941 to 1945, when 30 million people gave their lives. The circumstances in the other socialist countries has had a different historical background; the *people found* they had a Socialist Government at the end of the war, before the social positions inside these countries were ready for it. The Russian people were already convinced they needed Socialism in 1917.

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World Struggle

It is, I think only natural that the struggle to win the people in these countries is going to take a longer time than that our present party line on this subject caters for. It is going to take time for them to recognise the world struggle between capitalism and socialism, how it affects the internal position in their own countries, how the machinations of the CIA and other subversive capitalist elements are working inside the Socialist countries, not all these can be dealt with by legal and administration methods as Klugmann says. This is a major fault with our leadership over the question of Czechoslovakia, they work on the assumption that there is no CIA, and the people are already wholly convinced upon the merits of Socialism, a wrong assumption.

The major subversive attacks by the capitalists are directed against the weaker links in the Socialist countries, the ones near the western borders and with a strong bourgeois background. All these points Klugmann does not appear to take into consideration. When our leadership took its present line over the intervention, they did not want another 1956 situation, when the Party lost thousands of members when they supported the Soviet intervention in Hungary.

Upon this basis, a new theoretical line has evolved in the Party, a line of liberalism in a world situation of bitter conflict between socialism and capitalism.

The Truth

Klugmann says the party must have confidence in the masses to tell them the truth, however grim it might be. But are the Party leadership telling the British people the grim truth? Klugmann says the Soviet Union only sees the strength of the bourgeoisie', its plots, its subversion. What is the truth? How many potential Socialist countries have gone under in recent years? *Guatamala*, *Brazil*, *Indonesia*, *Greece*, *Cambodia*, the Congo, NATO contingency plans for Italy etc. We can speak nice sounding phrases to the British people about Democracy and Liberalism, this will sound good to the people who have had their ideas formed in a Capitalist Democracy, but it is not telling them the truth, however grim it might be.

If some comrades have to face questions about the intervention in Czechoslovakia, I think they should take the opportunity to expose the real nature of capitalism and the bitter struggle that is taking place. Some comrades don't seem to care how many Socialist countries go down in the struggle, just as long as it makes the job of explaining things easier for them.

Klugmann also says "Communists exert their leadership by the wisdom of their theory", what hypocrisy, they want to put their own house in order before criticising someone else. How many Comrades have been kept off leading Committees because they have not seen exactly 'eye to eye' with the leadership, and may I say, 1970 is not over yet.

Involvement of the People

Klugmann talks of involvement of the people in building Socialism, does anyone who takes a serious interest in this subject, deny how big a part the Soviet people play in building Socialism in their country; of the thousands of factory meetings which discuss the 5 year plans. What about the public committees that play such a big part in Soviet life; these committees abound in nearly every field of public endeavour and embrace some six million people. Nationwide discussions take place on their findings, these committees themselves are constantly changing, bringing in more people.

Dissent

Klugmann also says "to treat the dissent of the working people as subversion is no solution at all". This statement is, to say the least, ambiguous. Does he mean the whole of the working people, if so, where, in what country, or does he mean part of the working people, if so what percentage? The interference behind this statement implies that Klugmann has an intimate knowledge of the working people; what they think and feel in the various Socialist countries. The question of dissent is important, but what kind of dissent?

Constructive dissent can lead to progress, anti-Socialist dissent can lead to a questioning of the Socialist state itself and its guiding influence on Society. Again Comrade Klugmann does not differentiate on this point. In the Soviet Union, everyone has the facilities of dissent, if they care to use them, dissent of a constructive kind which can be expressed at public meetings and in the press as laid down under article 125 of the Soviet Constitution.

Democratic Centralism

A word on Democratic Centralism, which is also a vital question. The principle of Democratic Centralism itself is not in question, but surely it is based upon putting into practice certain policies. These policies will vary from country to country in accordance with the national and international situation in any particular area. Taking into account the present international situation and the past historical struggles that have taken place between Socialism and Capitalism, can one visualise a situation where the same balance between Democracy and Centralism can be applied in every

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situation? Did Lenin apply the same balance during the 10 historical days in 1917 as he did at other times? There were situations when he had to give directions and there were times in the maelstrom of the revolution when he involved the masses in an entirely new way.

The Stalin Period

During the war against fascism was the balance applied the same in every situation? In general it is a principle we must stand by, but I don't think it can be rigidly applied to every situation. Klugmann talks of the warping of this policy during the Stalin period, we all know Stalin did some shocking things, which must never occur again. But this is a point I am trying to make, I can see the reason why the principle was warped during the Stalin period. The Soviet Union was faced with a hostile, capitalist world, whose objective was to destroy the Soviet Union, they financed Fascist Germany with the objective of turning them against the Soviet Union. Can we say that suspicions and mistakes cannot occur during a situation such as this, can we say that a situation in the future will not occur again in the bitter conflict with capitalism, when the principles will remain intact. I think the only time we shall get a complete working of the principle is when we get a Communist Society all over the world.

The Russian leaders at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party did express criticisms of the Stalin period, emphasising the mistakes that had been made. What were the leaders of the British Communist Party doing during this period, did they also make mistakes in supporting Stalin. If they did, they should say so, self criticism is also a Communist principle. It is alright for certain individuals who represent the leadership to say in private "In the past we have supported the Soviet Union too much" but let the leadership put it into print and say it in public meetings, then these criticisms of the Soviet Union would ring more true. To public opinion, this article of Klugmann's is so smug and self righteous.

Roots of the Errors

In the section "Roots of Errors", Klugmann explains some of the difficulties the Socialist countries have had in building Socialism, he says "Life and the defence of the Revolution often demanded the greatest emphasis on the most rapid creation of a strong Socialist State". This is a big weakness in Klugmann's theorising, he talks in the past sense, do not these very things also apply today? Are not the Socialist countries still fighting to defend the Revolution and to extend it? If Comrades read this section in detail and fit it to the present day it fits perfectly, for Klugmann these things have passed into History. I don't know what kind of a world he lives in but I think King Street must be a very sheltered cocoon.

One or two comments on the Section of Stalin's "Theory of Intensification of Class Struggle". Again Klugmann lives in a dream world; for example, he makes the following statement, "As every Revolutionary knows, it is easy when there are real and clever enemies around us, to begin to see enemies where they do not exist". When I read this, I put the paper down and cheered, no CIA, no Imperialism, no subversion in the Socialist countries. He also talks about the philosophical attractions of socialism, which is the very essence of our social purpose, but he forgets that while the discussion is kept on a purely philosophical level the class enemy is working materially for the downfall of every progressive country. As good as saying, "You get on with your theory, I'll get on with my practice". It is a combination of the two that will win the day. Tell the peoples of the world the benefits Socialism can bring but also *support* what the Soviet Union is doing, giving help to the underdeveloped countries, giving arms to the countries who are locked in battle with Imperialism, defending Socialism inside the Socialist countries against weaknesses and Capitalist subversion.

I think our party leadership takes an opportunist line on questions of policies in the Socialist countries. This discussion is promoted to support these policies; they are making the theory fit their practice. An examination of the real world should show that international solidarity with the Soviet Union, in its fight against imperialism, is something that is real and necessary, it is not just a theory, as this article is.

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Why Did it Happen?

Roger West

I'm very glad Comrade Dobb wrote this article, since it reflects in considerable detail my own feelings about the distortions of socialism. We Communists, as a body, have been both enthusiastic and successful in preparing analyses of the social, political and economic relationships of capitalism, but it seems to me that we have all too frequently lapsed into superficial and even idealistic concepts when dealing with the Socialist states. We have allowed this to happen because we have felt that, what with *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Observer*, and the Socialist Labour League all knocking socialism, we ought to lean hard in the other direction to restore the balance. The opponents of socialism are in the position of the little boy who cried "wolf": we know that they will say anything nasty about socialism they can get away with, whether it be true or false: we therefore tend to assume that it is always false. This is why people such as myself waited for a lead from a comrade, such as Maurice Dobb, who has a close knowledge of the countries concerned and a well established reputation as a careful Marxist theorist.

It is common knowledge that the exigencies of the early steps towards socialism require centralisation, discipline and firm leadership. I have for some time suspected that the "leading role" of the Party could become transformed, insidiously, into a "priesthood" of socialism: that the Party could come to think that it has a sacred duty to keep the socialist state on the straight and narrow path, and that nothing, especially erroneous (?) ideas among the people outside the Party, should be allowed to deflect it from its duty.

From the exercise of the Party's legitimate functions in building and defending socialism, to illegitimate bureaucracy and authoritarianism is not a long step, and it is made easier by the uncertain position of the dividing line, and by the fact that the exercise of power is enjoyable to "mandarins" who can always excuse what is, in some cases at least, the pursuit of power for its own sake, by reference to the need to "further the aims of socialism". There is, I think, more resemblance between the growth in the power of Party officials today, and the corresponding process in the ecclesiastical establishment of the Middle Ages, than any communist can feel happy about. I think that is the growth of this trend that is responsible for the excessive anti-religious campaigns of some socialist states, and the demand for conformity to a too-narrow line that is made on the artistic and literary communities.

I must make it clear that these judgments are subjective, and that my fears may well have been exaggerated by the persistent efforts of the bourgeois press. Since my knowledge of the socialist states is only at second hand, and since the distinction between the legitimate exercise of Party influence and autocratic abuse of power is a fine one, I may be wrong: and I am quite open to correction by comrades who know those countries well.

But if my fears are well founded, then I am quite clear that it is the duty of our Party to criticise the abuses. If the CP's are, or are becoming, socialist "Catholic Churches"; if the Kremlin (or any other Party HQ) is turning into a "Vatican"; and if Comrade Brezhnev and his successors are becoming a line of communist "Popes", then this would be a disaster for the International Communist Movement and a *cul-de-sac* for socialism. And if some of these socialist countries think that their obligations to the international movement justify their overruling of Czechoslovakian sovereignty, then they can hardly complain if we "over-rule" them merely in print.

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